Master builder

Braley’s gift sets blueprint for health research and care

School of Nursing lives its mission
Health sciences library celebrates transformation
The beginning of a new academic year is always an exciting time, as new students flood the campus with their energy, enthusiasm and aspirations for exploring new fields of study and preparing for their careers.

In the Faculty of Health of Sciences, a record number of students have chosen McMaster to pursue their education in the health sciences field, and our Faculty is rolling out some prodigious developments.

As the future nurses, doctors, researchers, rehabilitation specialists and midwives begin or continue their education here, they have access to more resources of the highest quality than ever before.

Among the accomplishments we have recently achieved in the Faculty are:

- The announcement of an astounding $50 million gift from businessmen David Braley that will allow us to push forward with ever-greater research and health care initiatives;
- The expansion of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine to our first-ever regional campus;
- The completion of the $8.6 million renovation of the Health Sciences Library;
- The launch of several new graduate programs that will meet the demand for more specialized and highly-skilled professionals required by provincial, national and international health systems.

All of these developments will have a positive impact on our students and their ability to make the most of their time here at McMaster.

This year’s student body includes several firsts: the first students to take the new combined master’s and Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner program; the first students in the seven-year MD/PhD program; the first students in the graduate program in neurosciences; and the first class of MD undergraduates for the Waterloo campus of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine.

While specific enrolment numbers for the Faculty won’t be available until later this fall, we are likely to surpass the 4,000 mark as our numbers in the School of Nursing, the medical school and our graduate programs are all rising. The midwifery program is also set to expand as part of the provincial government initiative to train the midwives needed to meet the demand for their services.

And as we look forward to further growth, it’s also worthwhile to look back at how this all got started, to celebrate just how far we’ve come.

Our School of Nursing did just that earlier this year, when it celebrated its 60th anniversary. The first nursing students joined the Faculty of Science during the 1940s, at a time when health care was exploding with new developments. Now, with a student body of more than 1,600, and its growing programs and opportunities in graduate studies and research, the nursing school continues to provide national leadership in health care development. I congratulate the school’s leaders, particularly associate dean Catherine Tompkins, who have guided the school to this level of excellence.

As always, there have been many outstanding contributions and accomplishments by the people who make up our faculty and our alumni, and you can read about their awards and accolades in this magazine.

I hope that all of our alumni, faculty and staff share the same pride that I feel when I consider how much the Faculty of Health Sciences has accomplished. The future looks even brighter as, together, we advance health through learning and discovery.
McMaster’s Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute has made significant advancements in establishing itself as a leader in its field as it produces startling research discoveries, recruits star scientists and gets ready to set up the country’s first human stem cell library.

The institute made headlines in July throughout North America when a team of investigators reported a discovery on the development of human embryonic stem (ES) cells that will change how future research in the area is done.

An article published in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* outlined a new understanding of the growth of human stem cells, and the role of fibroblast growth factor.

“This will be critical for the future developments involving drug and gene screening of human ES cells that will be required before clinical use of human stem cells of this kind,” said Mick Bhatia, scientific director of the institute.

Stem cells, which have the ability to turn into many different types of cells, have been the subject of intense study for the past two decades, as scientists have been gradually deciphering the processes by which unspecialized stem cells become the many specialized cell types in the body.

Just two weeks prior to the *Nature* paper’s publication, the stem cell institute was in the news when it was announced it would be the site of Canada’s first library of human embryonic stem cells. The library will be launched with a $15 million donation from Hamilton businessman David Braley.

Other major developments include the announcement of Bhatia as the inaugural holder of the endowed Chair in Stem Cell and Cancer Biology. The chair is funded by a portion of the $105 million donated by Michael G. DeGroote to the Faculty of Health Sciences in 2003.

The McMaster Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute was established in early 2006 with the recruitment of Bhatia. Under his leadership, the institute has grown rapidly, with the recruitment of top investigators Bradley Doble, Christopher Wynder and Sheila Singh.

Located on the fifth floor of the Michael G. DeGroote Centre for Learning and Discovery, the institute is also home to 26 post-graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, laboratory assistants and staff.

The institute’s research focus is the molecular determinants of cancer and tissue repair.

Meet the Stem Cell Institute’s top investigators

In addition to Scientific Director Mick Bhatia, the McMaster Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute includes three other senior investigators. Recruitment of a fourth leading scientist is expected to be announced this fall.

The three are: **Bradley Doble**, Canada Research Chair in Human Stem Cell Biology and an assistant professor in biochemistry and biomedical sciences, joined the institute to pursue his expertise in understanding the biology of human embryonic stem cells. His research focuses on the signalling pathways, or circuitry that allows embryonic stem cells to make exact copies of themselves, while retaining the ability to change into all the various cell types found in an adult. He wants to provide new insight into how cancer develops and how stem cells could be used for the regeneration of tissue that has been destroyed by disease or injury. Before joining McMaster, Doble worked at the Ontario Cancer Institute.

**Sheila Singh**, an assistant professor in surgery and the newest senior scientist to join the institute, is a pediatric neurosurgeon at McMaster Children’s Hospital. Her research program for her PhD involved identifying cancer stem cells in human brain tumours, and she was instrumental in the discovery that brain tumours get started from cancer stem cells, which go on to fuel a tumour’s growth. The discovery holds the potential for creating cancer therapies that target the stem cells, and she will pursue this research in her role at McMaster. Combining her work as a pediatric neurosurgeon with her role as a research scientist will allow Singh to bring unique insights and exposure to patients she experiences as a doctor, to her work in the laboratory.

**Christopher Wynder**, an assistant professor in biochemistry and biomedical sciences, joined the institute after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, an independent, non-profit biomedical institute founded in 1892. His research focuses on understanding how stem cells can become any cell in the body. He is also investigating why some stem cells multiply normally, while others give rise to cancer. Wynder’s research involves determining the interplay of different factors within stem cells that have an impact in the decision on whether to multiply. Knowing how a stem cell first mutates into a cancerous cell may lead to the ability to better assess what factors lead to the development of cancerous tumours.
The future of nursing: Strengthening and improving health care

Carrie Saamanen (right), who is in the third year of the BScN program, learns from part-time faculty member Amy Palma as she tends to a dressing on a patient at McMaster’s Children Hospital.

Lead. Engage. Inspire. These three words capture the vision of McMaster’s School of Nursing as it moves forward from its 60th anniversary celebrated earlier this year.

With its recent seven-year accreditation of the undergraduate program and the top rating given to the graduate program, the school has now been recognized as achieving the highest standards for nursing education.

To complement this, the school’s researchers continue to excel in the face of increasing competition for funding, pushing new frontiers and directly influencing policy and practice, says Catherine Tompkins, associate dean health sciences (nursing). “The school is living its mission to strengthen the contribution of nursing to the improvement of health for all, locally to internationally, and is well on its way to achieving its vision.”

Seeking to be responsive to student needs and the emergent health needs of society, the school now has a variety of programs for a broad range of careers. In addition to the traditional four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) degree program, the school offers an accelerated program for students with prior degree credits in science, and a stream for diploma-prepared registered practical nurses wishing to become a registered nurse.

The BScN program, offered in collaboration with Mohawk and Conestoga colleges, is the third largest in Ontario and the only fully-integrated collaborative program where students can complete the full program at any site.

This year there were more than 300 graduates, a number that will increase to more than 400 by 2011. This is a quantum leap from 60 years ago when the School had one faculty member and 31 students.

Tompkins points out that the start and growth of the graduate programs for master’s and doctorate degrees represents another notable achievement in the school’s history. Since its launch in 1996, enrolment in the graduate program has increased to almost 100 students. To date, students have had options for specialization, including a program for cardiovascular nurse scientists, as well as diploma programs in health services and policy research, and in advanced neonatal nursing.

This year the first students begin the new master’s level of the nurse practitioner program.

Next year five new fields of study, built around the school’s strengths in research and scholarship, will be introduced. These are: health of populations, wellness and healing across the lifespan, health services and policy, nursing leadership and practice, and nursing education.

The school’s faculty and staff are the reason for its achievements and the foundation for continued success, said Tompkins. With 60 full-time and 300 part-time faculty, and more than 50 research and administrative staff, the school boasts internationally recognized scholars, vibrant relationships with clinical and community partners, and a breadth of expertise that attracts interest from both public and private sectors, she added.

Partnerships have also been made in Haiti, South Africa, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates and Trinidad, where the focus is primarily to build capacity or to enhance training programs for health care workers.

The school has not lost sight of the importance of investing in its own community, says Tompkins, a value manifest most clearly by the McMaster Student Outreach Clinic, known as MacSoc. Founded in 1999 by two nursing students, the clinic is a unique university-community partnership that conducts outreach and offers health advocacy and education on the streets of Hamilton to those who are homeless, poor or socially marginalized. Recently the school has partnered with Wesley Urban Ministries and the Hamilton Community Foundation to tackle the issue of poverty in the Beasley neighbourhood of the city.

Tompkins notes that coming from this involvement, the school has identified a desire to create a professorial chair in social inequities in health. Although a $2 million dollar endowment would be required, the scope of the chairholder’s influence would be local to global, encompassing the unique issues related to women and children, recent immigrants, and marginalized populations.

“The School of Nursing has a rich history of providing leadership in nursing education, research and practice locally, nationally and internationally,” said Tompkins. “Our alumni are both contributors to and evidence of our success. Graduates of McMaster’s School of Nursing are sought for roles in all areas of nursing practice and are the legacy that will sustain our contribution to enhancing health for all within our community and around the world.”
Mother, daughter graduate side by side

Marilyn and Christine Wilk together represent the scope of education provided by McMaster's School of Nursing and its partners Conestoga and Mohawk colleges.

When serendipity saw the mother and daughter receiving their nursing degrees at the exact same time during graduation ceremonies in June, it was a reflection of how the school has grown to meet the ever-changing demand for highly skilled nurses.

Marilyn, 54, had spent the last five years studying at McMaster to earn a Post RN Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) degree while working full-time at St. Mary's Hospital in Kitchener. She trained as a registered nurse in the early 1970s in the community college program, which at that time was the most common way to receive designation.

Christine, 25, had just completed the four-year BScN degree through the consortium program launched in 2001 after the province made the university degree a requirement to become a RN. She attended Conestoga College in Kitchener to obtain her McMaster degree.

"Graduating together was not at all planned," said Marilyn, explaining that she had originally hoped to finish the program in four years, but the heavy workload of school and full-time employment made that unmanageable. Meanwhile, Christine knew in high school that she was interested in nursing, but decided to take a couple of years off before starting the program when she was 21.

The result was they graduated on the same day and, in a twist of fate, ended up side by side in the procession to be handed their degrees by University Chancellor Mel Hawkrigg.

“We ended up walking across the stage together, which wasn’t planned, and that was really, really special,” said Marilyn. “The chancellor looked at Christine and said ‘is this your mother?’”

“It was an amazing experience to graduate with my mother,” said Christine, who is now working on the surgical ward at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

Both women praised the nursing programs, particularly the small-group, self-directed learning style, and the dedicated faculty at both the Conestoga site and the Hamilton campus.

“The personal attention really helped a lot,” said Marilyn, admitting that getting back into the routine of studying, attending class and writing essays wasn’t easy. “If we were struggling with anything at all, the faculty and tutors were there to help us.”

Research agenda rapidly expanding

The School of Nursing's growing focus on research is reaping major dividends.

For the 2006/07 fiscal year, faculty associated with McMaster's School of Nursing oversaw more than $6 million in research from a diverse group of agencies ranging from the Arts Research Board to the peer-reviewed Canadian Institutes of Health Research. That figure is more than double the amount of research funding in 2000.

The research conducted covers a plethora of health and social issues affecting everyone from the unborn child to the frail elderly.

Wendy Sword, assistant dean, research for the school, said research has been growing steadily, particularly since the mid-1990s, as programs for graduate students began, the number of PhD-trained faculty increased, and the importance of research to improving the care of various populations became more evident.

The creation of her role in 2005 was a sign of McMaster's commitment to continuing the development of research in the School of Nursing. In addition to Sword, both a full-time research co-ordinator and research assistant are implementing the growing research agenda.

The school also includes the internally funded Nursing Education Research Unit. Two other externally funded units – the System-Linked Research Unit on Health and Social Services and the Nursing Health Services Research Unit – are led by faculty members Gina Browne and Andrea Baumann respectively.

There are also three research chairs in cardiovascular nursing (Heather Arthur), advanced practice nursing (Alba DiCenso) and primary health care nursing (Ruta Valaitis).

“We are proud of the fact that our School of Nursing faculty members are recognized nationally and internationally for their contributions to the creation of new knowledge and to the incorporation of knowledge into health care practice and policy,” said Sword.
Research in the areas of kidney disease and child health have each received a major boost this year with the establishment of two new endowed chairs.

A $3 million investment in basic science research from the Canadian division of Amgen will fund the Amgen Canada Chair in Nephrology, a joint venture of McMaster University, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and Amgen Canada Inc.

Nephrology is a medical specialty focused on the study of the kidney, its structure, function and the diseases and ailments that can affect its proper functioning. The new research chair will combine McMaster's and St. Joseph's Healthcare's expertise in clinical and basic research with Amgen's strengths in biotechnology, to help people fight serious illnesses involving the kidneys. A search for the inaugural chairholder is underway. For more details on the chair announcement go to http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/pubrel/amgen.htm

A new endowed chair in child health research will be funded by $2 million from Scotiabank and its employees. Scotiabank has committed $500,000 over five years, and its employees will fundraise the additional $1.5 million.

The Scotiabank Chair in Child Health Research, an endowed professorial appointment at McMaster University, will be held by the director of the new McMaster Child Health Research Institute, a joint venture established recently by McMaster Children's Hospital and the University.

The institute will bring together scientific leaders who are at the forefront of child development research in Canada. It will be instrumental in allowing the children's hospital and the University to advance and influence research in all areas of child and adolescent health.

A search is underway for a leader in child health to lead the institute and be the inaugural holder of the chair. For more details on the announcement, go to http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/pubrel/child_health_chair.htm

These two new chairs bring the total number of endowed chairs in the Faculty of Health Sciences to 51.

Expanding and promoting the crucial role of nurses in providing primary health care in the community will be a key focus for associate professor Ruta Valaitis in her role as the inaugural holder of the Dorothy C. Hall Chair in Primary Health Care Nursing.

The endowed chair’s work will focus on education and research into existing and potential nursing roles in strengthening collaborations between primary care and public health. Valaitis also plans to help develop strategies to increase the capacity for primary health care with nurses working in multidisciplinary teams.

“I define primary health care in the broadest possible terms - including emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention, community participation, intersectoral collaboration and accessibility to care,” said Valaitis.

An event was held in September to announce her appointment to the chair, which is named in honour of Hall, a pioneer in primary health care nursing and long-time international nursing consultant with the World Health Organization.

Hall, who spent 26 years abroad pursuing her passion, advanced the role of nursing in primary health care in Canada and in countries such as Afghanistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and Denmark. She was also instrumental in helping the Ontario government implement the concept of the primary health care nurse practitioner in the provincial health care system. She was awarded a honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD) degree by McMaster at the School of Nursing convocation in June this year.

The chair was created through various donations to the School of Nursing, including a bequest from the late Henrietta Alderson, one of three founding faculty members of the undergraduate nursing program, and a contribution from Hall. Valaitis joined the School of Nursing at McMaster in 1987. She earned her master’s degree in health science from McMaster, and a PhD from the University of Toronto.
Charlotte Allard is finally realizing her dream of becoming a doctor – more than 25 years after she first decided that’s what she wanted to do with her life.

The fact that she will be able to do the bulk of her undergraduate MD training in her home community of Kitchener is a bonus she never anticipated.

The 42-year-old mother of two and former police officer is one of the 15 students who have been chosen for the inaugural class of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine’s Waterloo Regional Campus.

The students have joined the other 147 first-year students in starting classes at the McMaster campus in Hamilton, but will transfer to Kitchener in January to complete the three-year program. They will be located in temporary facilities there until the new campus being built in the downtown core is ready for occupancy in 2009.

“I am very excited and a little nervous about starting med school,” said Allard, who explained she only applied to McMaster’s medical school. “I really lucked out in getting the Kitchener campus.” It means she can stay close to her two sons, aged 10 and 12, and continue to care for her husband as he recovers from colon cancer.

Allard said she knew as a teenager she wanted to become a doctor, but a family death when she was in high school affected her grades, and she didn’t have the marks needed for university. Instead, she chose to become a police officer, serving as a constable with the Waterloo Regional Police Service for 11 years, before leaving to be a full-time mother. She used to walk a beat in the exact area of downtown Kitchener at Victoria and King streets where the new McMaster campus is being built. But she never lost the desire to become a doctor.

She spent 16 years taking various distance courses, eventually earning a liberal arts degree, than decided it was finally time to pursue her life-long dream. She was accepted into McMaster’s medical school on her first try.

Allard is an example of the diverse backgrounds of the students selected for the inaugural class of the Waterloo campus. The group also includes a teacher, a nurse, a computer programmer, a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, a software analyst and a former member of the Israel Defense Force. The students range in age from 21 to 43.

Kinneret Friedman, who was born in Israel, moved to Canada when she was 10, and then voluntarily returned to Israel in 2000 to serve for three years in the Defense Force. She said she wanted to be part of the Kitchener class because of the smaller size, and her interest in rural medicine.

“I like the idea of being part of a brand new environment. I know there will probably be some frustrations and bumps along the way, but at the same time it’s really exciting,” said the 25-year-old who has a degree in psychology.

While construction on the physical structure of the Waterloo campus is just now getting underway, the work necessary to launch the new campus has been intense for many months.

Karl Stobbe, who leads the medical school expansion team, said they have successfully recruited all of the doctors they need to teach tutorials for the first-year Waterloo class, and have filled the senior leadership roles for student affairs, faculty development, clinical skills and tutorials. Cathy Morris, chief of staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital, has been appointed assistant dean for the campus.

Details are still being finalized for the clinical clerkships for the Waterloo students, which will begin in December 2008.

Major infrastructure changes have also been implemented at the Hamilton campus to accommodate the technological capabilities needed to allow students located at the Kitchener campus to have full access to lectures, library facilities and other resources originating in Hamilton.

Stobbe said that the 15 Waterloo campus students will be mixed in with the McMaster campus first-year students for the first four months of the program they spend Hamilton.

“We want them to make friends, we want them to make connections, and we want them to feel like part of the bigger campus,” he said. “We are putting in communications structures to allow them to maintain those relationships after they are in Kitchener.

“We want morale to develop for the Kitchener campus, but at the same time we want them to very much still feel like part of the bigger student body.”
The Health Sciences Library has been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility that combines the latest in technological advances with an elegant design that encourages collaborations and inspires learning and discovery.

Three special events were held in the spring to mark the completion of $8.6 million in renovations that began nearly two years ago.

An open house in May gave faculty, staff, students and others from the community the chance to celebrate the redesigned library that encompasses more people space, enhanced technological capabilities such as wireless access throughout, elegant design elements, artwork and enhanced lighting.

The library now seats 760 people, with a mix of lounge chairs, individual study carrels, and a range of e-tables and study tables for collaborative work.

The extra seating and study space was made possible in part by the availability of more than 4,000 medical and scientific journals in electronic format, which means fewer stacks of print material. The library has reduced its physical hard copy collection by more than one-third.

There are 15 new group study rooms, which are important in McMaster’s problem-based learning environment, and an e-classroom with 24 laptops for hands-on training.

Susan Denburg, associate vice-president, academic, and associate dean of education, describes the health sciences library as central to the mission of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

“TThe library is the heart of knowledge resources not only for faculty, students and staff of the Faculty of Health Sciences, but also for anyone at McMaster University working in the broad area of health and for health care professionals across the city and beyond who have access to our services,” she said.

Two of the main highlights of the transformed library are the Jan and Mien Heersink Reading Pavilion and the C. Heersinks

Jan and Grada Wilhelmina (Mien) Heersink were born in the Netherlands and grew up on farms before emigrating with their four sons to Canada in 1951.

Jan worked for the Dutch Reformed Church, helping immigrants to settle in this country and find new jobs and housing. Later he worked for a Dutch bank, providing immigrant families with assistance in finding business opportunities in their new homeland.

He was appointed as the Dutch Vice Consul in Burlington in 1956. For many years, the Heersinks opened their home to countless Dutch families, who found there was always room at their table, and conversation over drinks. Jan Heersink died in 1983, and his wife passed away 20 years later.

Their four sons chose the Jan and Mien Heersink Reading Pavilion for the dedication to their parents as it is designed to promote the kind of interactive, social and nurturing environment in the library that the Heersinks provided in their home.

Marnix and Mary Heersink listen to the speeches during the opening of the Jan and Mien Heersink Reading Pavilion.

Students, faculty and staff from the Faculty of Health Sciences enjoyed refreshments during the May open house to celebrate the renovated Health Sciences Library.

John Kelton (from left), Peter George, and the four sons of Jan and Mien Heersink - Ben, Marnix, Ewout and John - are shown with the portrait of the couple that was unveiled during the official opening of the reading pavilion.

The Heersinks

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Barber Mueller History of Health and Medicine Room. Special events were held in April for the opening of each of these facilities.

The two-storey, glass-walled pavilion is an addition to the library made possible with a $1.3 million donation from the four sons of the Heersinks - Marnix of Alabama; Ben, of Massachusetts; John, of Dundas; and Ewout of Oakville. Its expanse is an integral facet of the library's new atmosphere that encourages collaboration and social interaction as important parts of the learning process.

The C. Barber Mueller History of Health and Medicine Room recognizes the importance of the library's historical collections. The room's features include a cove ceiling, recessed lighting, a fireplace, historical displays and comfortable leather chairs. It is named in honour of Mueller, a founding father of McMaster University's medical school and a dedicated supporter of the Health Sciences Library.

C. Barber Mueller, 90, served as the inaugural chair of the Department of Surgery in the Faculty of Health Sciences, from 1967 to 1972, and is the founder of Friends of the Health Sciences Library, a group dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the library as a vital resource. He launched the Library Enrichment Fund with a gift of $100,000 in 1998, and to date has contributed more than $400,000 to the Health Sciences Library.

Mueller earned his medical degree from the Washington University School of Medicine in 1942, and his career as a teacher and surgeon spanned more than 45 years, including stints at Washington University and the State University of New York, before joining McMaster in 1967.

Mueller became professor emeritus of surgery in 1983, and he has continued working as an author. He has received many honours, including an honorary degree from McMaster. In 2005 he joined the Faculty of Health Sciences’ Community of Distinction.
A $50-million gift from Hamilton businessman David Braley will transform family medicine in the city and forge new discoveries to treat common and catastrophic illnesses ranging from diabetes to cancer, Alzheimer’s and spinal cord injuries.

Braley, a former McMaster student and owner of Orlick Industries Ltd., announced in June the donation to the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine that will allow the establishment of Canada’s first library of human embryonic stem cells, and launch a Family Health Centre to serve the health care needs of Hamilton residents.

The gift also includes a $25 million endowment fund to be used for research or capital in the health sciences area.

“This commitment to the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine is an investment in education and health care for the people of Hamilton, Ontario and Canada,” said David Braley. “I see this as seed money that should be amplified by our government and industry to continue to build the medical school, the Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University and the Hamilton region.”

The establishment of Canada’s first Human Stem Cell Library holds the promise of future treatments and cures for numerous diseases, as leading researchers from around the world will be able to access its resources to advance their work.

The library will also cement the position of McMaster’s Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute as a national leader in cutting edge work investigating the potential of human embryonic stem cells.

The potential of the library will be magnified by the combination of the strengths of the stem cell institute and McMaster’s world-class biochemistry investigators. Co-directors of the library are Mick Bhatia, director of the stem cell institute, and David Andrews, a professor of biochemistry whose research group established a centre for functional genomics and chemical genetics at McMaster.

The library will use both healthy and cancerous human stem cell lines, and be a dynamic resource for researchers in both the academic and commercial settings. It will serve as a launching pad for international stem cell research, allowing stem cell lines to be cultured, engineered and then analysed in detail for characteristics, behaviours and interactions of genes.

In addition to the $15 million gift from businessman David Braley that will launch the library, financial support will come from government agencies and the business sector for the needed infrastructure and research initiatives.

“I am enthusiastic about the commitment to human embryonic stem cell research,” said Braley. “It is an investment in our top scientists who will help develop cures for terrible illnesses.”
The new Family Medicine Centre planned by the Faculty of Health Sciences will extend the innovative approach to primary care followed by the McMaster Family Practice program.

The centre will include a downtown family practice unit and after-hours clinic which will incorporate both academic and community physicians in an interprofessional model pioneered at McMaster.

John Kelton, dean and vice-president of the Faculty, and David Price, chair of the Department of Family Medicine, are involved in discussions to find a site in the downtown core for the centre, which has been given a head start with $10 million from David Braley.

The centre will be home to nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, social workers, dietitians, clinical pharmacists, lactation consultants and rehabilitation medicine specialists and students in these fields, working in a multi-disciplinary care model. Innovations will include self-management programs for conditions such as diabetes, and better use of leading edge information technologies.

“We will seek partnerships from the province and our city to provide a comprehensive education, care and research centre that should be located in downtown Hamilton,” said Kelton.

The centre will improve access to primary care for many Hamilton residents who are now without a family doctor, as well as provide state-of-the-art facilities for training doctors, medical students, nurses and other health care professionals.
Bradley Doble named to CRC

Bradley Doble, a scientist specializing in understanding the biology of human embryonic stem cells who joined the McMaster Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute last year, has been awarded a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair (CRC).

The CRC program provides funding at Tier 2 to exceptional emerging researchers who are acknowledged by their peers as having the potential to lead in their field.

Doble’s Chair in Human Stem Cell Biology will allow him to advance his work in understanding how embryonic stem cells make exact copies of themselves, while retaining the ability to change into all the various cell types found in an adult.

He also received $230,000 from each of the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Research Fund. He will establish a laboratory to study the biochemical mechanisms governing a key protein in the body known as GSK-3. The protein controls the shape, function and survival of cells in the body, but too much activity in it can be harmful, setting the stage for problems such as diabetes, bipolar disorder and Alzheimer’s.

Doble earned both his B.Sc. and PhD from the University of Manitoba. Before joining McMaster, he worked at the Ontario Cancer Institute. He held a postdoctoral research fellowship from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research from 2001 to 2006.

McMaster has a total of 66 CRCs.

Mark Levine leads new oncology department

Mark Levine, a McMaster researcher renowned for his work in breast cancer, has been appointed chair of the new Department of Oncology.

Levine is a professor in the departments of oncology and clinical epidemiology and biostatistics, and holds the Buffett Taylor Chair in Breast Cancer Research at McMaster University.

He is a McMaster alumnus, having completed his residency in internal medicine here along with his master’s degree in clinical epidemiology and biostatistics. He joined the Faculty in 1982. He has been an active researcher in clinical trials and health services research, with numerous clinical trials which have impacted health care in Canada and internationally.

The Department of Oncology was launched last year. Bill Evans, president of the Juravinski Cancer Centre, was the acting inaugural chair.

Other senior appointments announced recently included:

• Paul O’Byrne has been re-appointed chair of the Department of Medicine. He is the E. J. Moran Campbell Professor of Medicine, and the executive director of the Firestone Institute for Respiratory Health at St. Joseph’s Healthcare.

• Anthony Levinson has been re-appointed as the John R. Evans Chair in Health Sciences Educational Research and Instructional Development. He is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, and the director, Division of e-Learning Innovation for the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine.

• William Molloy has been re-appointed as the St. Peter’s/McMaster Chair in Aging. He is a professor of medicine, Division of Geriatric Medicine, director of the Regional Geriatric Program, and head of the St. Peter’s/McMaster Centre for Studies in Aging.

• Cheryl Missiuna has been appointed director of the CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability. She is an associate professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science, and an occupational therapist with graduate level training in educational psychology and special education.

President’s Award winners

Four individuals in the Faculty of Health Sciences received President’s Awards in the spring.

Boisco Paes, a professor of pediatrics, won the President’s Award for Educational Leadership. He has been involved in a range of educational leadership initiatives, including creating a graduate program that prepares neonatal nurse practitioners. It is the only program of its kind in Canada.

Three staff members were presented with President’s Awards for Outstanding Service at a ceremony in May. They are:

• John Bator, an educational technology specialist in the Faculty’s Computer Services Unit;

• Rose Mason, an undergraduate program assistant in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology;

• Allan Stafford, a research assistant in the Department of Medicine who works for Dr. Jeffrey Weitz at the Henderson Research Centre.

The annual service awards recognize employees who are neither faculty nor members of senior management, for outstanding contributions to advancing the mission of the University. The President’s Awards for Outstanding Service represent the highest honour the University can bestowed upon its non-teaching employees.
Haynes, Norman named to RSC

Two FHS professors have been elected to the prestigious Royal Society of Canada (RSC). Brian Haynes, professor and chair of the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, will receive a citation from the Academy of Science.

Geoff Norman, professor and director of the Program for Educational Research and Development, will receive a citation from the Academy of Social Sciences.

Election to membership in RSC is considered the highest honour among scholars, artists and scientists in Canada. Haynes is noted for his work improving clinical and health care through better ways to retrieve and disseminate health care information. He has set up a health knowledge repository of both evidence-based journals and Internet information services.

Norman has earned international recognition in the area of medical education by probing clinical reasoning, in particular, the thought process used by doctors when arriving at a diagnosis. He has won several awards for his accomplishments in improving the teaching and assessment of medical students.

The two were among six McMaster faculty members named to the RCS this year, the largest contingent from the University to be honoured by the Society in a single year.

Biochemistry celebrating its growth

The line up of speakers scheduled for the 40th anniversary celebration of the Department of Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences is an indication of the phenomenal growth the department has undergone since its launch in 1967.

Sessions on October 13, part of the two-day celebration, are by the department’s leading investigators who are conducting cutting edge research in the areas that are now top priorities in the department.

The department is inviting all former faculty, staff and students to take part in the anniversary that will highlight its growth in size and stature since the days when founding chair Ross Hall established a core group of faculty, primarily from chemistry, to form the department within the brand new McMaster medical school.

The primary focus at that time was on nucleic acids, and the department had fewer than a dozen faculty members. The department has grown to become recognized as one of the top centres for life sciences research in North America. More than 1,600 students have graduated from its programs, and it’s been awarded more than $10 million in research grants.

There are now 43 faculty in the department, which changed its name to include biomedical sciences three years ago.

Its research focus has expanded to include molecular biology and biotechnology, membrane biology, metabolism and toxicology, cell biology and regulation, microbiological biochemistry and antimicrobial research. The facilities have grown to encompass state-of-the-art laboratories, including the high throughput screening laboratory, which is unique in Canada, the Antimicrobial Research Centre, the Centre for Gene Therapeutics, the biophotonics facility and the McMaster Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute.

Chair Gerry Wright says the newest focus of the department is systems biology – the collaboration between life and physical sciences – which is often called the new biology. He says it involves considering many things at the same time, in multi-disciplinary teams, with an emphasis on large-scale data management and analysis.

The anniversary celebrations begin Friday, Oct. 12, and continue throughout Saturday. The research presentations on Saturday will include Mick Bhatia, director of the stem cell institute, talking about the biochemistry of human stems, and assistant professor Alba Guarne discussing DNA replication. Eric Brown, holder of a Canada Research Chair in Antimicrobial Research is talking on ‘Screening in Academe: It’s a small molecule world’, and assistant professor Ray Truant is discussing biochemistry in the new test tube of the millennium. Everyone is welcome to the sessions being held in the Ewart Angus Centre.

There will also be a poster session, department and campus tours, and a dinner featuring guest speaker Calvin Harley, a former faculty member who is now Chief Scientific Officer of Geron Corp. in California.

For details on the celebration, go to http://www.mcmaster.ca/ua/alumni/Bio_Celebration.htm
The Faculty of Health Sciences’ strength in research covering a broad range of subjects continues to be spotlighted through a variety of honours and awards.

The concept of evidence-based medicine, developed at McMaster, was chosen earlier this year as one of the top 10 of the world’s most important medical achievements since 1840, in a reader’s poll of the British Medical Journal (BMJ). The journal asked its readers to vote on a list of 15 medical advancements that have occurred since it started publishing. Evidence-based medicine finished eighth in a field that included such developments as sanitation, vaccines, antibiotics and the discovery of DNA structure. Leaders in clinical epidemiology in FHS were pioneers in the development of better methods for tracing and evaluating medical evidence more than 20 years ago. David Sackett, the first chair of the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, and Gordon Guyatt, who first coined the phrase, are among the key people who were involved in developing the methodology that integrates top research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values.

Harriet MacMillan, a renowned child psychiatrist and researcher, was named Researcher of the Year by the Centre of Excellence for Early Child Development (CEECED). She holds the David R. (Dan) O’ford Chair in Child Studies, and is a professor in the departments of pediatrics and psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences. The CEECD enables and promotes the dissemination of scientific knowledge on the social and emotional development of young children, and the policies and services that influence this development. MacMillan was honoured specifically for an important research study that examined the effectiveness of home visitation by public health nurses in preventing the recurrence of child physical abuse and neglect. While that study exposed the intervention as having no merit in preventing future abuse and neglect, it was cited as an important contribution to building the knowledge of how children grow and develop.

A computer program developed in conjunction with McMaster’s Department of Family Medicine that is helping to increase the number of people in Ontario receiving cancer screening has won an Ontario Health Minister’s Innovation Award. P-PROMPT (Provider-Patient Reminders in Ontario Multi-strategy Prevention) was one of six winners of the Celebrating Innovations in Health Care Expo 2007 Awards, which recognize innovative programs that are changing health care in Ontario. The award was given to the Department of Family Medicine and Fig P. Software Incorporated, which jointly created the software program that alerts doctors about patients who are overdue for cancer screening. The P-PROMPT team includes Rolf Sebaldf, an associate clinical professor of medicine; Janusz Kaczorowski, associate professor of family medicine; Ron Goeree, associate professor of clinical epidemiology and biostatistics; and Lynne Lohfeld, assistant professor of CE&B and associate member of family medicine.

John Evans, founding dean of McMaster’s medical school, is the winner of the 2007 Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research from the Friends of Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. The prestigious award recognizes leadership and innovation in the medical research field. Evans has an international reputation as a builder in education, health sciences and entrepreneurial sectors of medicine. He has been involved with major health research policy initiatives and played key roles in successful infrastructure renewal, both private and public.

Two named co-winners of Sibley award

The John C. Sibley Award for part-time faculty was shared by two people this year.

Surianarayan Ram Mohan is medical director of Clinical Teaching Programs for the Niagara Health System, and Viola Freeman is manager of genetic services for the Department of Laboratory Medicine at Hamilton Health Sciences. Both have taught a wide range of health sciences students, from undergraduate nurses, doctors and Bachelor of Health Sciences students, to post-graduate residents and fellows.

Ram Mohan, of Niagara Falls, is an associate clinical professor in the Department of Surgery who has been supervising McMaster surgical residents since 2000, and was instrumental in establishing the Surgical Clinical Teaching Unit (CTU) at St. Catharines General Hospital. He has been involved in the establishment of the Niagara regional campus of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, which will open next year.

Freeman, of Ancaster, has been teaching McMaster students since 1998, and has played a major role in the training and career development of cytogenetic and molecular genetics technologists. She was key in expanding genetics in the curriculum of the Bachelor of Health Sciences Program.

The Sibley award recognizes excellence, initiative and sustained commitment among part-time faculty of the Faculty of Health Sciences.
Three Health Sciences alumni received McMaster University awards during convocation and alumni events in the spring.

Nelson Sewankambo, a renowned leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa who received his Master of Science degree in clinical epidemiology at McMaster in 1989, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree (LLD) at the Faculty of Health Sciences convocation in May. He has been a doctor for more than 40 years, a world leader in the battle against AIDS in Africa for more than 20 years, and is active in numerous international research projects and other initiatives involving infectious disease, improving training for health care providers in Africa, and enhancing the quality of health care delivery in Africa. He was one of the first scientists to publish data on AIDS in Africa, and was instrumental in starting one of Uganda’s first AIDS clinics.

Julie Hard (M.Sc. PT ’03) received an Arch Award on Alumni Weekend in June. The awards recognize significant contributions made by recent graduates of McMaster. Hard, who also earned a Bachelor degree in kinesiology from McMaster in 1997, has been devoted to helping people with disabilities living in Kenya. This involvement began when she did a two-month clinical placement there as part of her master’s degree.

She was instrumental in the launch of the Kenya Working Group in 2003, which was formed within the framework of the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation at the University of Toronto. Hard is also a physiotherapist in the Inner City Health Program at St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto. Her contributions were also recognized in June by the The Canadian Physiotherapy Association, when she was presented with the International Health Award at the World Confederation of Physical Therapy Congress in Vancouver.

Robert Cushman (MD ’76, M.Sc. ’84) has been inducted into the McMaster Alumni Gallery, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to society.

Cushman is the Chief Executive Officer of the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, which covers the Ottawa Valley area. Before that he was the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Ottawa, and was instrumental in bringing in smoke-free legislation for workplaces and public places. He has received numerous honours, including the City of Ottawa’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005 and The Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal in 2003.

Outstanding teachers in the Faculty of Health Sciences – from professors to preceptors – were honoured in the spring for their contributions.

Nancy Pollock, an associate clinical professor in rehabilitation science, was selected as the Outstanding Health Care Educator of the Year by the Marskell Group and Health Careers Magazine. The award honours educators in schools, colleges, and universities whose accomplishments have made an extraordinary impact on their students, peers, academic institution and community.

Akbar Panju, professor of medicine, was chosen as a Regional Mentor of the Year by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. The award acknowledges Fellows of the college who have actively provided role models for medical students and residents, while demonstrating commitment to the welfare of patients and to excellence in clinical care and ethical conduct.

Two FHS members received McMaster Students Union Teaching Awards.

Bruce Wainman, an associate professor in obstetrics and gynecology, was named the winner for the Faculty for the third time, and Gloria Bott, an instructor, was the winner for the School of Nursing. The MSU Teaching Awards is a student-run service that recognizes and encourages excellence in teaching.

For the fifth consecutive year, Ari Shali, an assistant professor of pathology and molecular medicine, won the David Carr Teaching Award for the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. The winner of the award is chosen annually by the graduating MD class. Shali teaches in both the undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

The graduating MD class presented clerkship awards to Rob Whyte, Steven Haddock, Irene Turpie, Christine Bradley, Stephen Bates, Ramsay MacNay, Gagan Gaind and Monali Misra.

The William Osler Award was won by Lianne Gerber. The School of Nursing presented Preceptor Awards of Distinction to: Amy Hall at Guelph General Hospital (Conestoga site); Barbara Longo at Brantford General Hospital (Mohawk site); and Sabrina Ricci and Ann Marie Sirko of the City of Hamilton Public Health Services (McMaster site).
Pringle is known for her achievements in the nursing and health care communities provincially, nationally, and internationally, particularly in nursing education, gerontology and health policy.

She was dean of the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto from 1988 to 1999. She retired from the Faculty in 2005 and is now a professor emeritus. In 2000 she was presented with the highest nursing award in Canada, the Canadian Nursing Association’s Jeanne Mance Award for outstanding contribution to nursing. She has also been granted honorary degrees from three Canadian universities, and in 2005 she was recognized as a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, the national health advisory body in Canada.

FHS alumnus Thomas Dignan (MD ’81), who is renowned for his advocacy of aboriginal health care, has been named to the Order of Ontario, an honour that recognizes the highest level of individual excellence and achievement in any field.

Dignan has mentored hundreds of health care professionals. He is a co-founder of the Native Physicians Association of Canada and a founding member and first president of the Native Nurses Association of Canada. He earned both his RN and a BScN prior to attending medical school. He served as Thunder Bay’s first emergency physician, and is a licensed pilot, enabling him to work as a fly-in physician serving the northern and western regions of Ontario.

He is currently a primary care physician for Anishinawbe Muskiki Native Health Access Centre in Thunder Bay, and a medical officer for the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada.

Two alumni of the Faculty of Health Sciences have been named Officers of the Order of Canada. Eric Hoskins, who graduated from the MD program in 1985, and Dorothy Pringle, a 1964 graduate of the School of Nursing, were among 87 Canadians selected for the honour that recognizes outstanding achievements, especially in service to Canada or to humanity at large.

Hoskins has dedicated his life to helping civilians caught in the crossfire of war, and is president of War Child Canada, a humanitarian organization dedicated to helping children affected by war.

A leading expert on war and its effect on civilian populations, Hoskins has more than two decades of experience working with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations in some of the world’s most heavily affected conflict areas, including Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. He has also spearheaded innovative out-reach programs that engage Canadian youth on international issues.

He has previously been awarded the United Nations Lester B. Pearson Peace Medal and the Governor-General’s Meritorious Service Cross for his work in war-torn communities.

Harold Richardson, who established the microbiology program for McMaster’s new school of medicine in the early 1970s, has died at the age of 68.

A professor emeritus, pathology and molecular medicine, Richardson was recruited to McMaster University from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Medical School in 1971.

He made many significant contributions to education, research and service during his 27 years with McMaster and the Hamilton Regional Laboratory Medicine Program, including serving as director of postgraduate education from 1982 to 1990 and director of medical microbiology.

Over his career, Richardson held many provincial and national appointments in health care organizations. He was president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario in 1990 and president of the Canadian Association of Medical Microbiologists.

In 1994 he was invested as a Knight of the Order of St. John, by the Governor General of Canada, as a result of his volunteer work with St. John Ambulance.

He became professor emeritus in 1998, and from then until his retirement in 2006 he devoted his time to the Ontario Medical Association as director of the Laboratory Proficiency Testing Program.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Richardson, who was a faculty member in pathology and molecular medicine until her retirement last year, three children and six grandchildren.

Charles Dunnett (1921-2007), professor emeritus with the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, has died at the age of 85.

Dunnett, who was a McMaster alumnus and a Second World War veteran, joined CE&B as a professor in biostatistics in 1974, and later also joined the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. He was named professor emeritus in both departments in 1987.

He was one of the founders of the field of multiple comparisons, and his paper on multiple comparisons with a control published in 1955 is one of the most cited papers in statistics. The Dunnett procedure proposed in that paper is widely used in diverse applications, especially in clinical trials.

In 1982, he served as president of the Statistical Society of Canada, and was awarded the Society’s Gold Medal in 1986. He also served as co-ordinator of the graduate program in statistics at McMaster.

Dunnett is survived by his wife, three children, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.
FHS alumni: Where are they now?

1970s

Wendy Levinson, MD '76

Wendy Levinson, who holds a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair, has been appointed physician-in-chief of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. Levinson will help set the strategic direction of the hospital's research and teaching mandates. She had been a professor of medicine at the University of Chicago School of Medicine and at Oregon Health Sciences University, and most recently held the Sir John & Lady Eaton Professor and Chair of Medicine at the University of Toronto.

Nancy Fram, BScN '77

Nancy Fram started out as a neonatal nurse at McMaster University Medical Centre after she graduated, and has risen through the ranks to become vice-president professional affairs and chief nursing executive at Hamilton Health Sciences. Her work is focused on ensuring that health professional staff are positioned to provide excellence in patient and family centred care, and she is responsible for ensuring that the standards of practice, code of ethics, current legislative and statutory requirements are incorporated into decision making throughout the organization. She is a clinical lecturer in the School of Nursing. Fram lives in Ancaster, enjoys golf and has one son who has just started university.

1980s

Kathryn King, BScN ’80

Kathryn King is a professor in the Faculty of Nursing and Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Calgary (UC), and holds a Population Health Investigator Award from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. She has been teaching at UC since 1999, after attaining a master’s degree and a PhD in nursing from the University of Alberta, and doing post-doctoral work in the Faculty of Medicine at UC. Her work as a cardiovascular nurse scientist focuses on cardiac recovery and determinants of heart health decisions. She has recently completed a multi-centre clinical trial investigating the use of a novel undergarment to aid women's recovery from cardiac surgery, and is investigating the influence of gender and ethnic-cultural affiliation on secondary prevention decision-making.

Julie Moreland, B.H.Sc. (PT) ’82; M.Sc. ’94

Julie Moreland is a research co-ordinator and physiotherapist at St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton, and an assistant clinical professor with McMaster’s School of Rehabilitation Science. She has served as a tutor, clinical skills lab instructor, supervisor of research projects, and clinical preceptor. She enjoys her involvement in the tutorial process “since the relevance of what is learned is always related back to the patient problem.” She works with health practitioners to develop research questions and execute their projects. As a physiotherapist, she sees patients on the hospital’s nephrology and renal transplant units. Moreland lives in Caledonia. She enjoys visits with her son, Ryan, being caregiver to her parents, exercising and participating in a book club.

1990s

Rebecca Comley, MD ’99

Rebecca Comley, an emergency physician at St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver, has been chosen as a 2007/2008 Action Canada Fellow. The fellowships recognize outstanding leadership initiative and commitment to Canada, and gives recipients the opportunity to take part in initiatives that focus on ways to enhance Canada’s international leadership profile and its impact in world affairs. Comley has worked in a variety of clinical settings, including urban emergency medicine, general practice in the Canadian Arctic, and out-post medicine in Antarctica. During clinical work in Nunavut, she became increasingly aware of population health issues and the impact of public policy on communities’ health, and went on to complete a Master of Public Health at Harvard University, specializing in health policy and management. She is also an accomplished pianist, and enjoys camping, travelling, and hiking on the tundra.

2000s

Ashley Jones, B.H.Sc. ’06

Like many who take McMaster’s Bachelor of Health Sciences degree, Ashley Jones has decided to pursue a career in patient care. But her future patients will be animals rather than people. She is now in her second year in the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. Jones was in the McMaster program when she had to take a sick puppy for treatment at the veterinary college. She realized that the depth and breadth of veterinary medicine would give her the opportunity to become a specialist in medicine, acting as a general clinician, pharmacist and surgeon for animals. She spent this past summer working at the college in research, gaining hands-on experience in appointments and surgeries. She enjoys reading, listening to music, travelling, exercising and hanging out with her dog, Daisy.

Would you like to be included in the Where Are They Now feature? Please email us at network@mcmaster.ca, to let us know what you've been up to since you graduated from McMaster.
The life of McMaster MD graduate Beverly Walters has zigged and zagged across the years, several countries and a plethora of career paths.

She's an accomplished neurosurgeon and a noted authority in clinical epidemiology. She's also been a Lamaze instructor, an opera librettist, a freelance journalist and author, a single mother of two while obtaining her medical training, a university professor, developer of a software company that enhances the use of evidence-based medicine in clinical settings, and an interior design consultant. And for a while, she achieved something akin to rock star status in the country of Croatia.

Now in her early 60s, Walters has closed her neurosurgical practice to devote her time to CarePath, the web-based software company that is dedicated to the delivery of evidence-based medicine in the United States. And she still finds time to pursue her passion for interior design.

Many of her successes in life can be traced back to her education at McMaster, and she speaks highly of her alma mater. She plans to translate her pride in McMaster into a significant donation that can provide scholarships in future to mature medical students such as she was in the late 1970s.

“My dream has always been, ever since I graduated, to try to give back to the (McMaster) community,” she says.

The Alabama native moved to Canada after marrying a Canadian who was an opera composer. He wrote the music and she wrote the lyrics. Her connection to Mac started in the early 1970s when, as a certified Lamaze childbirth instructor, she began teaching in the medical school’s residency training program. She was convinced by faculty member Corinne Devlin to consider medical school.

“I had never seriously considered med school before. I thought I was too old. I was 33 and had two young children, and I couldn’t see how I could possibly do this,” she said.

“I only applied to McMaster,” she said. “As an older learner, I couldn’t see myself in a traditional curriculum. It had to be problem-based learning, and if I didn’t get into McMaster, I wasn’t going to go to medical school.

“It was going to be Mac or nothing.”

She began as a medical student in 1978, when her sons were three and five years old. She had intended to become a family physician or obstetrician, but her very first experience with neurosurgery at Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children in a first-year elective changed her career path once again.

“I did my first brain surgery in the fourth week of that elective. It was a tremendously high point for me,” said Walters. “I was bitten. But I thought, ‘this is crazy. I’m already an old lady. How can I possibly finish medical school, internship and a long residency?

“It had to be problem-based learning, and if I didn’t get into McMaster, I wasn’t going to go to medical school.”

“I spent the rest of medical school trying to talk myself out of surgery, but at the end of the day, I had as much passion for it after three years, as I did in that very first elective.”

During the 1980s she did a surgical internship and a neurosurgery residency in Toronto, while raising her two young sons on her own. Then she returned to McMaster to earn a M.Sc. in 1989 as she pursued her interest in clinical epidemiology sparked during her undergraduate program.

She taught at the University of Toronto and worked as a neurosurgeon in Toronto for the next few years. In 1993, she and her second husband, Dr. George Buczko, an anesthesiologist, decided to move to Rhode Island, where Walters became chief of neurosurgery at the Miriam Hospital, and an associate professor at Brown University Medical School.

She later became a professor of neurosurgery at New York University School of Medicine, and an adjunct professor of surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Until retiring from active practice recently, she performed surgeries at several hospitals in Rhode Island and Manhattan, pursued clinical research, played critical roles in creating and publishing best practice guidelines from evidenced-based medicine, co-authored the textbook Evidence-Based Neurosurgery, and helped the citizens of Croatia gain access to a medical procedure that was once unavailable in that country.

Her first trip to Croatia in 1998 was to share her expertise in evidence-based guidelines for treatment of patients with severe traumatic brain injuries. That role morphed into an endeavour to train a Croatian neurosurgeon to perform anterior cervical fusion, a surgical
procedure involving the neck and spine that previously was never performed in that country.

She made numerous trips to Croatia to perform the surgery and supervise others, and considers it her second home.

“Every time I went there to do the surgeries, there were newspapers and televisions – it was a little like being a rock star,” said Walters. “People would come up to me on the streets and say ‘hey, you’re that American neurosurgeon.’”

There are now about 100 of the procedures done annually in Croatia, and Walters is a visiting professor at the University of Zagreb.

Walters and her husband, who is still practising medicine, continue to live in Rhode Island, but maintain close ties to Canada. Her sons Ryan Pannell, 35, and Dylan Pannell, 33, live in Toronto. Ryan runs a multi-media company and Dylan has just started a residency in family medicine at the University of Toronto.

Walters said she would love to still be practising surgery, but found it was impossible to maintain her clinical work while also dedicating herself to the implementation of evidenced-based medicine guidelines in neurosurgery.

“This work became so important to me . . . and I realized that this was the next stage in my career,” she said.

Both she and her husband are starting to think about retirements. That’s when she plans to give back to the medical school that launched a multifaceted and successful career.

“I had an opportunity here that I might not have had as an older woman, and I’d like to help others have that same kind of opportunity.”

Members of the 1977 MD class gather in front of the Faculty Club during reunion celebrations in June.

Alumni from the MD class of 1977 and from the School of Rehabilitation Science (SRS) came back to campus in early June to celebrate reunions.

The School of Medicine’s 30-year reunion was attended by 30 members of the graduating class of 1977. Events on the first weekend in June included a wine and cheese, campus tours, lunch at the University Club in Alumni Hall and dinner at the Hamilton Club.

John Evans, founding dean of the medical school, was the guest speaker at the luncheon, leading a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis on the health care system.

SRS graduates from the 1992, 1997 and 2002 classes celebrated together on the second weekend in June with a fun run, family picnic lunch, tours of the Institute for Applied Health Sciences where the SRS is now housed, and dinner at the Faculty Club.

Nearly 60 alumni and their families took part in the various events.

Among SRS graduates attending their reunion were (from left) Lori Burton, Shirley Rodrigues, Heather MacLeod and Jennifer Klein.
Reunions planned for Health Sciences

The year 2007 has been a busy one for reunions in the Faculty of Health Sciences. In addition to the School of Rehabilitation Science and Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine reunions held in June, several more medical school and School of Nursing classes have reunions planned for October. Below are the details of the coming events.

2007 Class Reunions

School of Nursing Class of 1977 - 30th Reunion
Saturday, October 13, 2007
Location: McMaster University, Hamilton, ON.
Lunch at the University Club, 12:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Reunion Committee: Lindsay Wizowski & Ingrid Fell

School of Nursing Class of 1982 - 25th Reunion
Saturday, October 13, 2007
Location: McMaster University, Hamilton , ON.
10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Library & Campus Tours;
Lunch at the President’s Residence
Reunion Committee: Lynda Bentley Poole & Barb (Mackey) Loiskandl

School of Nursing Class of 1992 - 15th Reunion
Saturday, October 13, 2007
Location: Water Street Cooker, Burlington, ON
Dinner: 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Reunion Committee: Kelly Turner & Barb Zrinscak

MD Class of 1982 - 25th Reunion
Friday and Saturday, October 19 – 20, 2007
Location: Various locations, Hamilton, ON
Activities include a Wine & Cheese Get-Together (Friday), tours of the Health Sciences Centre and a reception and dinner (Saturday).
Reunion Committee: Aubrey Goldstein, Denice Feig, Lyla Graham, Rose Giammarco, Paul Lyons & Elaine Scales

MD Class of 1997 - 10th Reunion
Friday and Saturday, October 26-27, 2007
Location: McMaster University, Hamilton, ON.
Activities include a Wine & Cheese (Friday), brunch and children’s activities (Saturday).
Reunion Committee: Patricia (Trish) Murphy

To RSVP for your reunion or for more information, contact the Alumni office at 905-525-9140, ext. 23900 or alumni@mcmaster.ca. You may also reach us toll free at 1-888-217-6003.

2008 Class Reunions

MD Class of 1988 - 20th Reunion
Date: June 2008
Locations: TBA
Reunion Committee: Miles W. Ellis

Did you graduate in a year that ends in a three or an eight? If so, your class is celebrating a reunion in 2008. The FHS Advance-ment Office will assist representatives of the reunion classes in co-ordinating mailings and events to plan your reunion. Reunions can be planned to coincide with Alumni Weekend in June or Homecoming Weekend in the fall or anytime throughout the year.
For more information on planning a reunion, send an e-mail to intouch@mcmaster.ca or call 905-525-9140, ext. 22170.

Stay Connected

Share your news, interests, achievements, hobbies and activities with friends and colleagues! We would like to hear from you. You are welcome to send in your photos too. E-mail us at alumni@mcmaster.ca or visit our website where you can log on to your alumni web community at www.mcmaster.ca/ua/alumni

Calling all nursing alumni

In an effort to strengthen its connection with alumni, the School of Nursing has developed an online survey to gather information from all alumni of undergraduate and graduate programs.
The online survey provides an easy way for alumni to update the school on where they are and what they are doing, and asks for their input on what they would like to see on the alumni section of the School of Nursing website, or from the school in general.
All alumni are asked to take a few minutes to fill out the survey at http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/nursing/alumni.shtml