Supporting a Passion

NORA AND DEAN FRANCIS MAKE ESTATE GIFT SO PT STUDENTS CAN PURSUE GLOBAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES

Early in her 20-year career at Northwestern, Nora Francis, PT, DHS, started hearing that physical therapist students were interested in traveling outside the United States for clinical education. It was the late 1990s, and the Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences had no global health options in place. Dr. Francis decided to help set up these opportunities, not knowing they would take more than a decade to establish and end up being a part of her enduring legacy at Northwestern.

“What sounded like a simple idea turned out to be a much more complicated process,” recalled Dr. Francis, who served on the Continued on Page 2
faculty of the medical school’s Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences from 1997 until her retirement in 2018. “But a group of students teamed up with me, and in the end it was the right thing to do.”

Thanks to Dr. Francis’s leadership, today students in Northwestern’s Doctor of Physical Therapy program can pursue global health experiences in Punta Gorda, Belize, and Concepción, Chile. Feedback from students, as well as published literature evaluating opportunities like these, point to a myriad of benefits for participants—and their future patients.

“The students reported an improvement in their communication skills, especially their ability to communicate through an interpreter to effectively provide patient care,” Dr. Francis said. “Students also improved on their flexibility and adaptability as they practiced providing care with limited resources.”

Dr. Francis remembers one student’s eye-opening experience with a patient in Belize who had a spinal cord injury. Wanting to help the patient exercise in water, but lacking the necessary facilities, the student and supervising physical therapist brought the patient to a nearby lake. Another student provided care for a teenager with cerebral palsy who spends the majority of life at home. This allowed the student the opportunity to become aware of the limitations to community participation and accessibility for individuals with disabilities that are embedded within Belizean culture. The students used some of their time in that country teaching elementary school children about accepting people with disabilities into their communities.

“After just four or eight weeks away, students come back with measurable changes in their cultural competency and appreciation for people with different points of view,” Dr. Francis explained. “These skills are useful abroad and also at home as the students go on to become physical therapists working with patient populations in a variety of geographical locations.”

Estate Gift Will Make Global Health Trips More Accessible

Despite all the benefits Dr. Francis witnessed while facilitating the global health experiences, she realized that some students did not participate for financial reasons.

“I was very aware that there were students who were interested but having a hard enough time affording a professional physical therapy education, let alone the added cost of airfare to Belize or Chile and living expenses there,” Dr. Francis said. “I thought to myself,
‘When I retire, I am going to leave money so students who have the financial need will be able to participate in these wonderful opportunities.’”

Dr. Francis’s husband, Dean, was fully on board. Formerly Director of Development for the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis and a United Methodist pastor with a doctor of divinity degree, he has seen the impact of philanthropy firsthand.

“We were both principally involved in nonprofit organizations our whole careers, and we know how bequests and significant gifts can push an institution forward,” Rev. Dr. Francis said.

The couple decided to make a generous estate gift to create the Francis Student Travel Fund. The fund will support physical therapist students with demonstrated financial need who want to pursue international clinical experiences near and dear to Dr. Francis.

The Francises, who now reside on the Old Mission Peninsula outside Traverse City, Michigan, appreciate the benefits of travel on a personal level, too. They’ve participated in mission trips in Bolivia and Senegal and, closer to home, volunteered for the Appalachia Service Project, which provides home repairs for low-income families in rural Central Appalachia.

“Our world is literally expanded when we encounter people from different cultures,” Dr. Francis said. “The mission trips and even our recreational travel have helped us home in on why these experiences are so valuable to students.”

The couple’s advice to others considering a planned gift? “Focus on an area that is your passion and think about where there is an unmet need or a program that you can help grow and sustain. For us, global health is a passion, and I know the PT program has a huge need for scholarships,” Dr. Francis shared. “We tried to balance what we might leave our family with causes that are important to us, like supporting these students.”

---

**Being Charitable in Challenging Times**

We are a community of givers. We look after our neighbors and those less fortunate. We take adversity in stride, determined to overcome the challenge. We come together. We help each other.

That is what you have done, and—with your charitable wisdom and faithful support—that is what we will continue to do.

At Feinberg, planned giving provides opportunities for donors to help themselves while helping others, now and in the years to come. Depending on the gift, you could minimize taxes for yourself and your heirs, earn lifetime income, and improve the future of human health.

**Consider the benefits of these planned giving options:**

1. Making a gift to Feinberg in your will or revocable living trust doesn’t affect your finances today.
2. Designating Feinberg as a beneficiary of retirement plan assets is another way to keep your current budget intact, with potential tax benefits.
3. Establishing a charitable gift annuity with Feinberg provides you with secure income for life.

Please contact Larry Kuhn, associate dean, Development and Alumni Relations, at 312-503-1717 or larry-kuhn@northwestern.edu to confidentially discuss legacy opportunities to help meet your personal financial and estate planning goals while supporting the future of our medical school.

© 2020 Northwestern University. All rights reserved. Information contained herein was accurate at the time of printing. The information in this publication is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax adviser. Figures cited in any examples are for illustrative purposes only. References to tax rates include federal taxes only and are subject to change. State law may further impact your individual results.
We are so grateful to the alumni and friends who informed us over the last year that their estate plan includes Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, and we are pleased to recognize them as members of the Henry and Emma Rogers Society. Through charitable bequests, gift annuities, insurance policies, and other forms of planned gifts, members of the Rogers Society have created a lasting legacy for Northwestern students, faculty, and university programs.

Sanford P. Antin, MD  
Patricia Conard Birk, MD  
Stanley J. Gradowski, Jr.  
James Houk, PhD (deceased), and Ninette Houk

This list reflects individuals who have shared their estate plan with Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine between August 31, 2019, and May 31, 2020. We have made every effort to provide accurate information. If you note an oversight, however, please contact Sarah Kalsbeek at s-kalsbeek@northwestern.edu or 312-503-3459.