

MAA SAYS

THEY DECIDED IT'S TIME TO DO SOMETHING.

The annual cost of medical school for those in the Class of 1970 was less than 2% of what it is today and represented about 9% of the median annual household income in the United States that year. Compare that with today's tuition, which costs about 87% of the median household income, according to U.S. Census figures.

"It wasn't this bad back then," says **William Young**, a retired obstetrician/gynecologist living in New Hampshire.

Young and four others from the Class of '70 have established a fund for students underrepresented in medicine.

Retired pediatrician **Mark Friedman** got the fundraising effort going. Friedman had become frustrated reading about health inequities. He saw little progress in solving those problems and began asking himself where he could make a difference, however small. The idea that appealed the most was helping students whose passion is the same as his—caring for others through medicine.

"I had been hearing a lot of general talk about needing to do things, but decided it's time for action, not just talk," he says. (To note, Friedman, like the other fund founders, has been giving back in many ways. For instance, the Friedmans are leading a committee in Boston, where they live, that sponsors an Afghan immigrant family. Friedman gets animated talking about the family's successes in their newly adopted city.)

It was in 2019 that Friedman and Young found themselves helping to plan their 50th class reunion for the following year. The formal event didn't happen until the fall of 2022 because of the pandemic, but the experience brought them closer to classmates **Graham Johnstone**, **David Laman** and **Michael Linver**. These five alumni founded the fund, meeting routinely over Zoom to hash out the details and forming friendships in the process.

"I was friendly with David Laman but not close friends with the other guys," Friedman says. "That's all changed. The guys in this group . . . we all listen to each other and get along very well together. Michael Linver is the best at keeping us together through emails. It's been great."

The fund, created in the name of the Class of '70, is a roughly \$30,000 allotment that Pitt Med's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion oversees. **Chenits Pettigrew**, EdD associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion in the School

of Medicine, notes the money is being used as gap funding, primarily to help students attend national conferences and pursue professional development opportunities.

Recently, his office was able to send 13 medical students to the Student National Medical Association's (SNMA) Annual Medical Education Conference in Connecticut using the fund. Three of those students will hold leadership positions with the SNMA in 2024, including **Ja'Nia McPhatter**, who will serve as president (see story on right).

"There are holes to fill that further enhance their experience," Pettigrew says. "This support is making that possible."

Johnstone, a retired orthopaedic surgeon, and Linver, a radiologist, both say they owe much to Pitt Med, and they want to pay it forward.

"I have dedicated my professional life to trying to make the world a better place for others through my work on breast cancer detection," says Linver, "and the opportunity to help make the lives of some Pitt Med students a little better is yet another way for me to follow that path."

Laman wants more of his classmates to support the fund. "I encourage them to share their money generously with the medical school," says the retired pulmonologist. "I personally owe a great deal of my success to the school."

Says Friedman, "My children also see this as very important and often honor me by making donations to the fund for my birthday or Father's Day. That is the best gift because seeing the fund become reality has been a very rewarding experience for me." —MA



TIME OUT

Shown here—scenes from the 1970 Hippocratean yearbook. Can you identify these snoozers? Let us know.

Since refreshed from their med school days, five classmates from 1970 have joined forces to build a fund in support of underrepresented students. See "MAA Says."



PHOTOS FROM 1970 HIPPOCRATEAN

SPOTLIGHTS

FROM GROUNDOUTS TO GROUNDWORK: **DAVID CHARP**

David Charp, a retired internist living in Northern California, knows how to put the proper spin on things.

"Though I had a medical career with no particular academic honors," he says, "I did see a lot of patients for free, probably made 3,000 house calls and never sent a patient to a collection agency.

"And maybe no med school alum has a better fastball and slider."

At 79, Charp (MD '70) still laces up his cleats each week as a player in the Northern California Baseball League—a league for the average guy who loves the game and for retired professional players.

Charp pitched for Rutgers University in the 1960s before coming to Pitt Med. He recalls catching the tail end of Pittsburgh Pirates games at Forbes Field after his classwork was done for the day.

"They were an up-and-coming team but weren't drawing crowds," says Charp. "They would open up the stadium in the 6th inning to anyone who wanted to watch. I would go in and purposefully sit in right field so I could watch Roberto Clemente. He could throw a bullet from right field to third base."

But while America's Pastime is a big part of his life now, it fell off Charp's radar for years after becoming a practicing physician and raising a family.

He and his wife, Gail, headed west after he graduated from Pitt Med. Charp took a job with the U.S. Public Health Service and practiced in southern New Mexico for a couple of years, doing everything from treating snake bites to delivering babies.

After landing permanently in Santa Rosa, California, Charp opened a private office that he ran for 40 years.

About the time he retired in 2014, Charp worked with a few other physicians to launch the Jewish Community Free Clinic in Santa Rosa. At the start, the clinic was open one evening every week or two in a synagogue. A family then donated a house, which Charp and his colleagues converted into a four-exam-room clinic.

After the donation of the house, the clinic was no longer just an evening operation, and Charp volunteered there until about a year ago.

Charp estimates the clinic, which is still running, has saved the city and state millions of dollars because "half of these people would've gone straight to the emergency room." —MA

COURTESY CHARP



David Charp repropose to his wife, Gail, at home plate in Oakland Coliseum on their 50th anniversary.

ONE TO WATCH: **JA'NIA MCPHATTER**

Rising third-year Ja'Nia McPhatter will lead the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) next year, becoming national president of the country's oldest and largest organization dedicated to supporting students underrepresented in medicine. McPhatter, who has an MBA in health systems management, will be the second student from Pitt Med to hold the post.

"The culture of connectedness, outreach and networking opportunities was something I knew I wanted to be a part of," McPhatter says. Since joining the local SNMA chapter, she has been inspired by the mission to increase the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent and socially conscious physicians in the health care pipeline. When the presidency position went unfilled, she thought, "How could I not step up?"

The student fund created by the Class of 1970 (see "MAA Says," left) helped McPhatter and several others attend the SNMA's national conference in April. McPhatter is also a recipient of an MAA Scholarship.

She is thankful for her supporters who keep her grounded, notably **Rachel Eleazu** (MD '23), past national vice president of SNMA and peer-mentor to McPhatter, and former SNMA president **J. Nadine Gracia** (MD '02, Res '05), who has served in leadership roles in the U.S Department of Health and Human Services and is now CEO of Trust for America's Health.

The best advice Gracia has given to McPhatter? "Be a sponge." The first year is one of learning, during which she will prepare her executive agenda.

"It's great for Pitt Med to have a national figure, as far as recruitment efforts and more," McPhatter says. "I'm lucky to have family and friends here to support me in striving to be my best self while leading the organization that's given me so much."

—Micaela Corn

