People and programs that keep the school healthy and vibrant

SALAD WITH THAT BURGER?

SERVING FUTURE MEDICAL SCIENTISTS

BY ALICIA KOPAR & JOE MIKSCH

Hamburgers cost only 15 cents at the White Tower restaurant on Craig Street when Sylvester Sutton Hamilton III (MD '61) was in medical school at the University of Pittsburgh. The bargain burgers were flimsy and greasy, but Hamilton scarfed down the low-cost belly bombs habitually to keep his expenses down.

Burgers have become a little more expensive—as has med school. But because of Hamilton's generosity, Pitt med's Brian Shirts (Class of '08) gets the last two years of med school on the house, something not offered on the White Tower menu.

Hamilton, retired chair of psychiatry at the University Medical Center at Princeton and former director of the psychiatry residency program at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, recently established the Drs. S. Sutton Hamilton Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) Scholar award for Pitt MD/PhD students. The scholarship honors four generations of Hamilton physicians: Hamilton's grandfather was a general practitioner in Punxsutawney, Pa. His father, S. Sutton Hamilton Jr., interned at Presbyterian and Magee hospitals in the 1930s, and his son, S. Sutton Hamilton IV (MD '97) received his medical degree from Pitt.

Shirts' recently completed PhD research examined the interaction between genes and environment in relation to the development of schizophrenia. If a firm link is found, he contends, it may be possible to manipulate genetic pathways and modulate exposure to pathogens as a way to reduce risk.

As Shirts enters into his surgical rotation, the scholarship positions him well for the future by freeing resources for further training, he notes.

Students in the MSTP program are eligible for the scholarship if they have completed the PhD and are two years away from the MD degree. The award covers the last two years of tuition and includes a $2,000 stipend for the duration of the scholarship.

Years ago, when Hamilton joined the faculty at Penn, he was impressed by how his Pitt medical education stood up to those of his colleagues, and he grew to appreciate great teaching.

"As a youngster," he says, "I thought that if I ever had a little bit of money, I would like to make the very best teachers available to students." ■

Gathering in honor of the new scholarship, from left: Medical Scientist Training Program organizers Clayton Wiley & Manjit Singh, with Carol Hamilton, student Brian Shirts, S. Sutton Hamilton IV, S. Sutton Hamilton III

BOOSTER SHOTS

Vaughan Stagg was the clinical director of the Matilda H. Theiss Child Development Center in Pittsburgh's Hill District from 1988 until he died in June 2004. Affiliated with Pitt's Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, the center is a place where children and low-income families receive the sort of help that changes lives, including parenting programs, dental care, a preschool, and nursery programs for at-risk children. Stagg was a PhD and assistant professor of psychiatry in the School of Medicine. His memory will live on at the Theiss center, which has dedicated a children's library and a memorial garden in his name.

When **Henry Posner Jr.**, a prominent Pittsburgh businessman, ran into difficulty with his spine, he found himself in the right place—under the care of James Kang (Res '91), a Pitt associate professor of both orthopaedic and neurological surgery. The quality of care motivated Posner and his wife, **Helen Posner**, to create a new faculty chair in orthopaedic surgery. Their $1 million gift, matched by UPMC, will support research on degenerative disc disease in Pitt's Ferguson Laboratory for Orthopaedic Research. The lab is directed by Kang, who is expected to be the first holder of the Posner family chair.

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