

# EVMS

*MAGAZINE*



**EVMS researchers take on the vaping trend**

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# EVMS

## MAGAZINE

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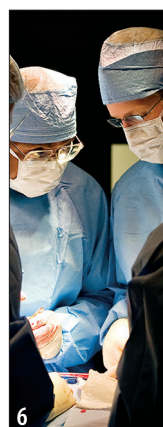


## Up In Smoke: EVMS researchers take on vaping

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Is it cause for concern that teen use of e-cigarettes is rising rapidly?

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More than 40 years ago, the community founded our medical school to combat a shortage of specialty and primary care in the region. While we are proud to continue to meet the clinical workforce needs of the commonwealth and beyond, EVMS also contributes to the development of new knowledge and science, which leads to advances in the practice of medicine.

In this edition of *EVMS Magazine*, we explore new opportunities that are enabling EVMS to improve the health of our friends and neighbors through scientific discovery:

- The Fetal Cardiovascular Center, led by Alfred Abuhamad, MD, recently received a \$2.7 million federal grant to study the human placenta. Dr. Abuhamad's findings will develop new technology applications to improve and deliver more effective care for high-risk and normal-risk pregnant mothers. See the story on page 5.
- EVMS scientists have found what could become a new way to identify people at risk for developing diabetes. That discovery may lead to the development of new treatments to actually prevent the disease. You can read more on page 9.
- Our feature story focuses on the grant-funded research that we hope will modify teen attitudes toward e-cigarettes and help curb the alarming vaping trend among youngsters. See page 12 for details.

We are fortunate to have so many caring supporters who share our vision — individuals like Joan and Macon Brock, whose 2012 gift established the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health at EVMS. The Brocks received well-deserved recognition for their generosity recently in New York City when the Association of Fundraising Professionals named them the 2015 Outstanding Philanthropist. Learn more on page 8.

You may have noticed you are receiving our magazine more often. There is just so much good news to share that we have expanded our magazine from three to five issues a year to deliver it in a timelier manner.

Thank you for your continued support of EVMS. Our successes and discoveries are only possible because of you.

Sincerely,

Richard V. Homan, MD

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# CARVING CALORIES

2,207 VS 613

Chess Pie  
(1/12 pie) **340**



Pecan Pie  
(1/12 pie) **314**



Ham  
(4 oz lean + fat) **275**



Beef Roast  
(4 oz lean) **274**



Roasted Turkey  
(4 oz) **225**



Cheese & Crackers  
(1 oz & 4-6 ea) **194**



Sweet Potato  
Casserole (3/4 c) **165**



Roll and  
Margarine (1 ea) **125**



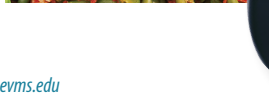
Dressing  
(1/2 c) **107**



Nuts  
(2 T) **106**



Green Bean  
Casserole (3/4 c) **82**



**613**



The goal of eating healthy tends to fly out the window when it comes to the holidays, but it doesn't have to. You can still enjoy a delicious meal without consuming more than a day's worth of calories in one sitting. EVMS dietitian Phyllis Woodson, MS, RD, CDE, explains how to carve almost 1,600 calories from your next holiday feast.

**225** | Roasted Turkey  
(4-5 oz)

**80** | Roll  
(1 ea)

**76** | Fall Vegetable  
Medley (1/2 c)

**72** | Ambrosia  
(1/2 c)

**60** | Shrimp (8 ea with  
lemon/cocktail sauce)

**53** | Dressing  
(1/4 c)

**47** | Acorn Squash with  
Pineapple (1/2 c)





# EVMS receives \$2.7 million NIH grant to help improve pregnancy outcomes

High-tech ultrasound software will enable EVMS researchers to study the placenta, which could lead to improved pregnancy.

EVMS has been chosen to take part in a nationwide, federally funded research effort that may lead to improved care of mother and child during a difficult pregnancy.

The Fetal Cardiovascular Center at EVMS-Maternal Fetal Medicine, led by Alfred Abuhamad, MD, is the recipient of a \$2.725 million NIH grant to study the human placenta during early pregnancy to search for early signs of pregnancy complications within the placenta, with the goal to improve outcomes for the mother and child. The grant was awarded as part of the Human Placenta Project, a research initiative launched by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, to understand the role of the placenta in health and disease.

"In many ways, the placenta is the forgotten organ, but it shouldn't be that

way because abnormal development of the placenta is commonly associated with problems during and after birth," says Dr. Abuhamad, the Mason C. Andrews Chair In Obstetrics and Gynecology, Vice Dean of Clinical Affairs, and Professor and Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology. "This grant will allow us to apply novel ultrasound tools on the placenta during early pregnancy to predict these poor outcomes early on and ultimately design a treatment plan to address it."

This research proposal awarded to EVMS focuses on three main areas that haven't been studied in this way during pregnancies, according to Dr. Abuhamad. Those areas are microvascularization of the placenta, placental tissue elasticity and placental calcification content. Dr. Abuhamad's team will use new, high-tech ultrasound software, provided by Toshiba, to achieve study goals. The research team hopes these factors will contribute to the



Alfred Abuhamad, MD

development of an algorithm that could predict late pregnancy complications in early gestation.

"This is fantastic news," says Jerry Nadler, MD, the Harry H. Mansbach Chair in Internal Medicine, Vice Dean of Research, and Professor and Chair of Internal Medicine. "Obtaining funding from the NIH is an indication of the high quality of research being carried out at EVMS in order to improve the health of people in our community and beyond." □



Learn more about this research at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



# Students earn perfect score on licensing exam

Each year, second-year medical students nationwide take a nerve-wracking test of their medical knowledge.

The test is “Step 1” of a three-stage test known as the United States Medical Licensing Exam. Students must pass all three parts — taken at various times during their training — to earn a license to practice medicine.

This fall, students in the EVMS Class of 2017 pulled off a rare feat when all of them passed Step 1 of the exam — on the first try. Nationwide over the last two years, the average pass rate was 94.5 percent.

*“This is a high-stakes exam,” says Ronald Flenner, MD (MD ’89).*

“This is a high-stakes exam,” says Ronald Flenner, MD (MD ’89), James E. Etheridge Jr. Distinguished Professor, Professor of Internal Medicine and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs. “Many residency programs won’t even consider students who have failed Step 1.”

Derwin Gray, MD, a member of the EVMS Board of Visitors, took note of the accomplishment at the board’s September meeting. He praised the students for “stepping up to the plate and hitting the ball out the park.” He credited the administration, the board and the faculty for their roles in the achievement.

Dr. Flenner also attributed the success to the students — with a little assistance



Ronald Flenner, MD

from the school.

“We’ve had support from the administration to provide practice exams that were administered prior to their sitting for the USMLE exam,” Dr. Flenner says. “We also had support from Academic Development to help equip students with the study skills that facilitate success.” □



Learn more about this exam at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).

## Level 1 trauma center marks 30 years of service

Thousands of lives have been saved in the 30 years since Sentara Norfolk General Hospital (SNGH) and EVMS partnered to open the region’s only Level 1 Trauma Center.

The SNGH/EVMS team partners on one of only five Level I trauma centers in the state. The Level 1 designation indicates that the center is capable of providing total care for every aspect of the most life-threatening of injuries — from prevention through rehabilitation. And for the past three decades, EVMS surgeons have been on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to make that care possible.

“EVMS Surgery plays an integral role in the trauma center, and we are proud to care for the critically injured people of the region,” says L. D. Britt, MD, MPH, the Edward J. Brickhouse Chair in Surgery, the Henry Ford Professor of Surgery, and Chair and Professor of Surgery.

The trauma center handles cases from Williamsburg to the Outer Banks, provides trauma care for the Navy and takes all pediatric trauma cases in the region.

October marked the official 30th anniversary of the center. □



Go to [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine) to learn what it means to be a Level 1 trauma center and to hear patient stories.





## EVMS researcher ties legal drinking age of 18 to high school dropout rate

A new study led by EVMS researcher Andrew Plunk, PhD, raises the possibility that a younger drinking age could have the unintended effect of boosting the high school dropout rate.

The report, published in the September issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, looked back at high school dropout rates in the 1970s to mid-80s — a time when many U.S.



Andrew Plunk, PhD

that when the minimum drinking age was lowered to 18, high school dropout rates rose by about 3 percent. Black and Hispanic students — who were already more vulnerable to dropping out — appeared to be more greatly affected; high school dropout for both groups increased by about 4 percent.

states lowered the age at which young people could legally buy alcohol to 18.

Dr. Plunk, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, says the study found

The lowered age had a particular impact on young people whose parents had drinking problems — their dropout rate increased 34 percent.

And why would the legal drinking age matter when it comes to high school dropout rates?

“The minimum legal drinking age changes how easy it is for a young person to get alcohol,” Dr. Plunk says. “In states where it was lowered to 18, it’s likely that more underage students were able to get alcohol from their legal-age friends who were still in high school.” □



Learn more about this study at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).

## EVMS physicians are *Top Docs*

More than 300 physicians with ties to EVMS were selected as “Top Docs” in the 2015 listing recently published by Coastal Virginia Magazine.

The EVMS physicians include full-time and volunteer faculty members, along with 83 alumni. Michelle Brenner, MD (Pediatrics Residency '98), Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, was featured on the magazine’s cover. □



For a full list of this year’s honorees, go to [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



## Joan and Macon Brock honored with national philanthropy award

Joan and Macon Brock, whose philanthropic gift to EVMS in 2012 established the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health, have been named the 2015 Outstanding Philanthropist by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP). The award was presented to the couple at AFP's National Philanthropy Day Honors in New York City.

"Joan and Macon Brock's philanthropic impact reaches across the United States and the globe," the AFP announcement said. The couple has given more than \$40 million to numerous organizations, including those involved in education, social action and the environment, three of their biggest passions. AFP's Hampton Roads chapter and EVMS nominated the Brocks for the award.

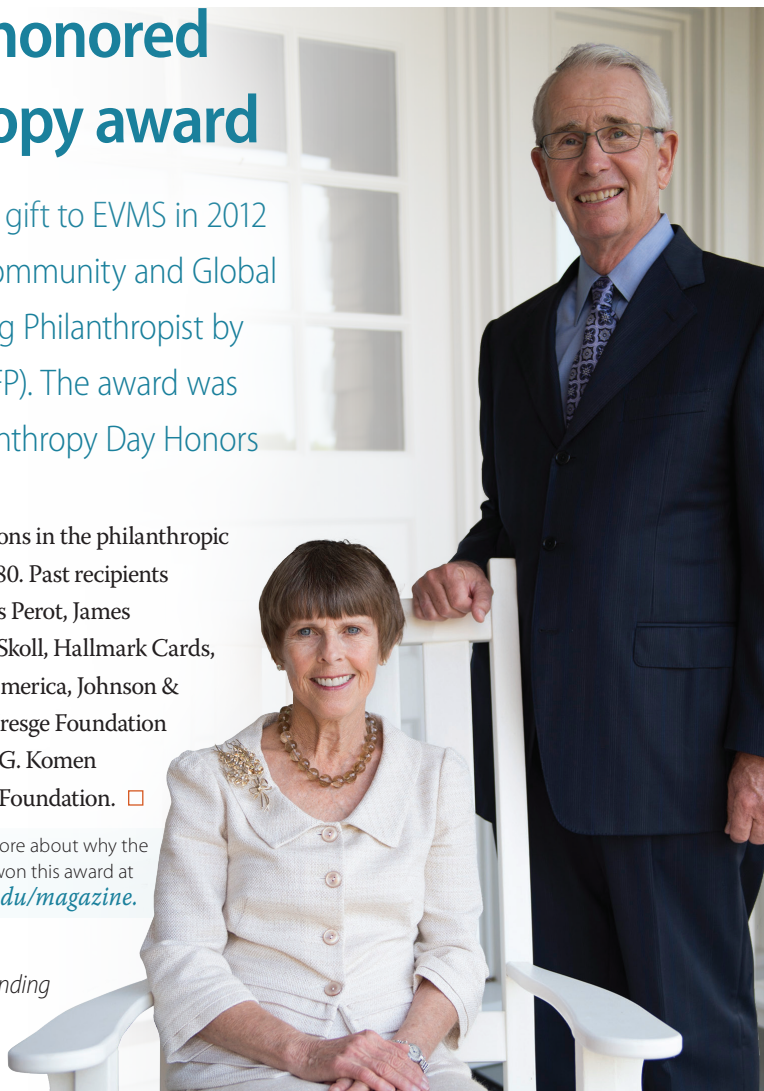
AFP's National Philanthropy Day Honors have highlighted outstanding individuals

and organizations in the philanthropic world since 1980. Past recipients include H. Ross Perot, James Michener, Jeff Skoll, Hallmark Cards, Inc., Bank of America, Johnson & Johnson, the Kresge Foundation and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. □



Learn more about why the Brocks won this award at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).

*Joan and Macon Brock were named the 2015 Outstanding Philanthropist by the Association of Fundraising Professionals at AFP's National Philanthropy Day event in New York City.*



## EVMS, William & Mary partner on narrative medicine program

Every patient has a story. Narrative medicine offers a way for caregivers to uncover those stories and determine what role they play in each patient's illness and healing. To that end, EVMS and William & Mary have teamed up to teach narrative medicine to W&M undergraduates and EVMS' students, residents and faculty.

"It has become increasingly evident that understanding the patient's experience is an essential part of providing effective care," says Mekbib Gameda, EVMS Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion. Narrative medicine trains caregivers to consider patients' stories, as well as their

symptoms. It encourages them to validate a patient's experience and to be creative and self-reflective in their approach to treatment.

Three EVMS departments — Diversity and Inclusion, Family and Community Medicine, and Pediatrics — have formed a unique partnership with certain W&M faculty. Not only is narrative medicine being offered to specific EVMS students, residents and faculty, it is also being introduced to W&M students pursuing majors in Pre-Med; Theatre, Speech & Dance; English; Africana Studies; and other departments.

Along with Mr. Gameda, Teresa

Babineau, MD (MD '90, Family and Community Medicine Residency '93), Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, and Natasha Sriraman, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, represent EVMS in this effort.

"The William & Mary-EVMS pilot has exciting possibilities for the training and practice of health-care providers," W&M Provost Michael R. Halleran says, "and it demonstrates the value of the partnership between our two institutions." □



To learn more about this partnership, visit [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



# Type 1 diabetes

## *Research may result in new blood test that will detect predisposition*

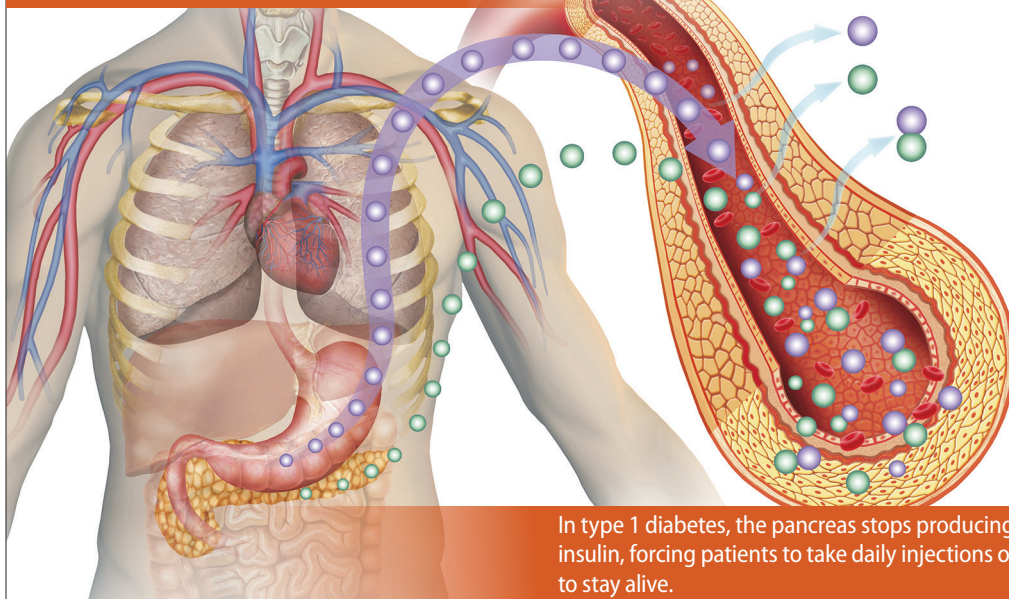
One day, your doctor's office may be able to give you a blood test to learn if you're destined to develop type 1 diabetes.

EVMS scientists, working with colleagues at the University of Florida Gainesville and University of Miami, have found unique biomarkers — distinctive biological clues — that they believe can identify people at risk for developing the disease. The research discovery may lead to a test to determine someone's predisposition to become ill and encourage the development of new treatments to prevent someone from developing diabetes, says Jerry Nadler, MD, the Harry H. Mansbach Chair in Internal Medicine, Vice Dean of Research, Professor and Chair of Internal Medicine and at EVMS.

In type 1 diabetes, the pancreas stops producing insulin, forcing patients to take daily injections of it to stay alive.

"Type 1 diabetes usually is diagnosed in children and young adults," Dr. Nadler says. "Anything we can do to improve health and prevent the onset of

Type 1 diabetes usually is diagnosed in children and young adults.



diabetes is a monumental step forward." The findings were published in August 2015 in the online journal PloS One.

The discovery follows a comprehensive study of proteins found in the pancreas. The researchers examined tissue samples representing three disease states: organ donors who had autoantibodies associated with type 1 diabetes but no disease, donors with type 1 diabetes and donors with type 2 diabetes.

The scientists used mass spectrometry to search for proteins distinctive to diabetes, says Julius Nyalwidhe, PhD, Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology and an expert in the science of proteomics at the Leroy T. Canoles Jr. Cancer Research Center's George L. Wright Center for Biomedical Proteomics.

They found unique patterns of proteins in the tissue from the three disease states. Those patterns were missing in non-disease control tissues, Dr. Nyalwidhe says.

Margaret Morris, PhD, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, and Tanya Burch, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow in microbiology and molecular cell biology at the Canoles Cancer Research Center, were lead authors on the publication along with Drs. Nadler and Nyalwidhe. The research was funded by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) and the National Institutes of Health. □



Find out more about this research at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



Jerry Nadler, MD

*"Anything we can do to improve health and prevent the onset of diabetes is a monumental step forward."*

— JERRY NADLER, MD

## Awards salute organizations that support breastfeeding families

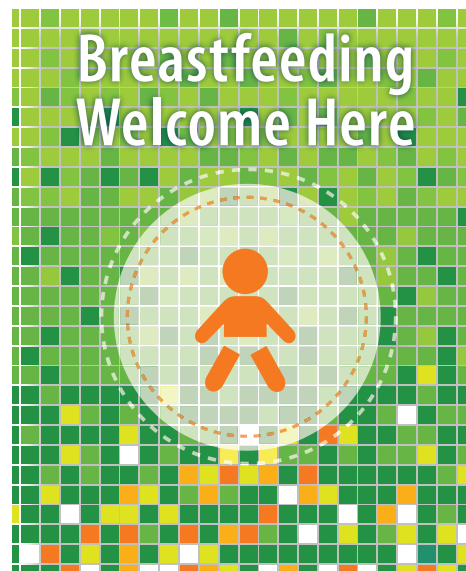
At this year's Businesses Investing in Babies (BIB) Awards, employers, churches and community organizations across Hampton Roads were honored



for their support of breastfeeding. The Consortium for Infant and Child Health (CINCH), based at EVMS, and EVMS Pediatrics saluted the winners for creating welcoming environments for breastfeeding families.

The goal is to increase awareness and public acceptance of nursing and support the health of women and babies. These awards recognized organizations that made significant policy changes, including creating lactation rooms for women in the workplace, and adding "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" signage in their establishments.

The BIB Awards Celebration was held during World Breastfeeding Week in August. The ceremony included sharing lessons learned and best practices. □



For a full list of this year's BIB Award winners, visit [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).

## EVMS students complete inaugural research fellowship with William & Mary

William & Mary and EVMS recently partnered on a new student-faculty research project. Three EVMS students completed the 2015 Schroeder Center-Brock Institute (SC-BI) Summer Fellowship Program.

"This fellowship is a wonderful collaborative effort between EVMS and William & Mary's Schroder Center for Health Policy, introducing students to research that can impact the health of our community," says Cynthia Romero, MD (MD '93), Director of the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health at EVMS. "This program was designed for our students to learn from their faculty mentors, from William & Mary faculty and from each other."

During the seven-week program,

Jillian Rae Capucão, a first-year MPH student in the epidemiology track, and second-year medical students Meghana Kaloji and Abirami Thiyagarajan completed individual research papers relating to health-policy analysis or health-services research.

The EVMS SC-BI fellows posed their own research questions, interacted with four W&M student fellows and worked with a faculty mentor from the partnering institution.

"I hope our EVMS SC-BI fellows gained insight from this research



*The inaugural Brock Institute/William & Mary fellows from EVMS were, from left, Jillian Capucão, Meghana Kaloji and Abirami Thiyagarajan, pictured with Brock Institute Director Cynthia Romero, MD.*

experience," Dr. Romero says, "and that it may inspire them to pursue research and quality-improvement activities that benefit their communities." □



# Discovery could lead to more effective heart-disease treatments



Eva Forgacs, PhD

Researchers from EVMS and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School have made an important breakthrough in the fight against heart disease — the leading killer in the nation. The discovery came as scientists were examining the action of a new class of drugs called cardiac myosin activators, which bind to the motor protein that powers the heart.

“Most current drugs influence the signals that trigger the heartbeat but do not directly influence the mechanics of the heart muscle,” says Eva Forgacs, PhD, Associate Professor of Physiological Sciences at EVMS. Dr. Forgacs worked with the lead investigator on the study, examining one drug already in clinical trials for treating systolic heart failure.

Researchers believe this is an important step forward in understanding how cardiac muscles function normally and in diseased states. The discovery was published in a recent edition of *Nature Communications*. □



## Philanthropy champions honored at annual donor event

On Thursday, Oct. 22, EVMS leaders expressed their gratitude for the generosity of all of the school's donors and presented the annual philanthropy champion awards to the following honorees:

Outstanding Philanthropic Student:

**Barron Frazier, MD Candidate, Class of 2016**

Outstanding Corporation:

**Liberty Tax Service**

Outstanding Community Champion:

**Sertoma Club of Norfolk**

Board Leadership Award:

**Stephen Snyder**

EVMS Philanthropy Champion:

**Obici Healthcare Foundation**

EVMS Staff Philanthropy Champion:

**Chief Andrew J. Mitchell III**

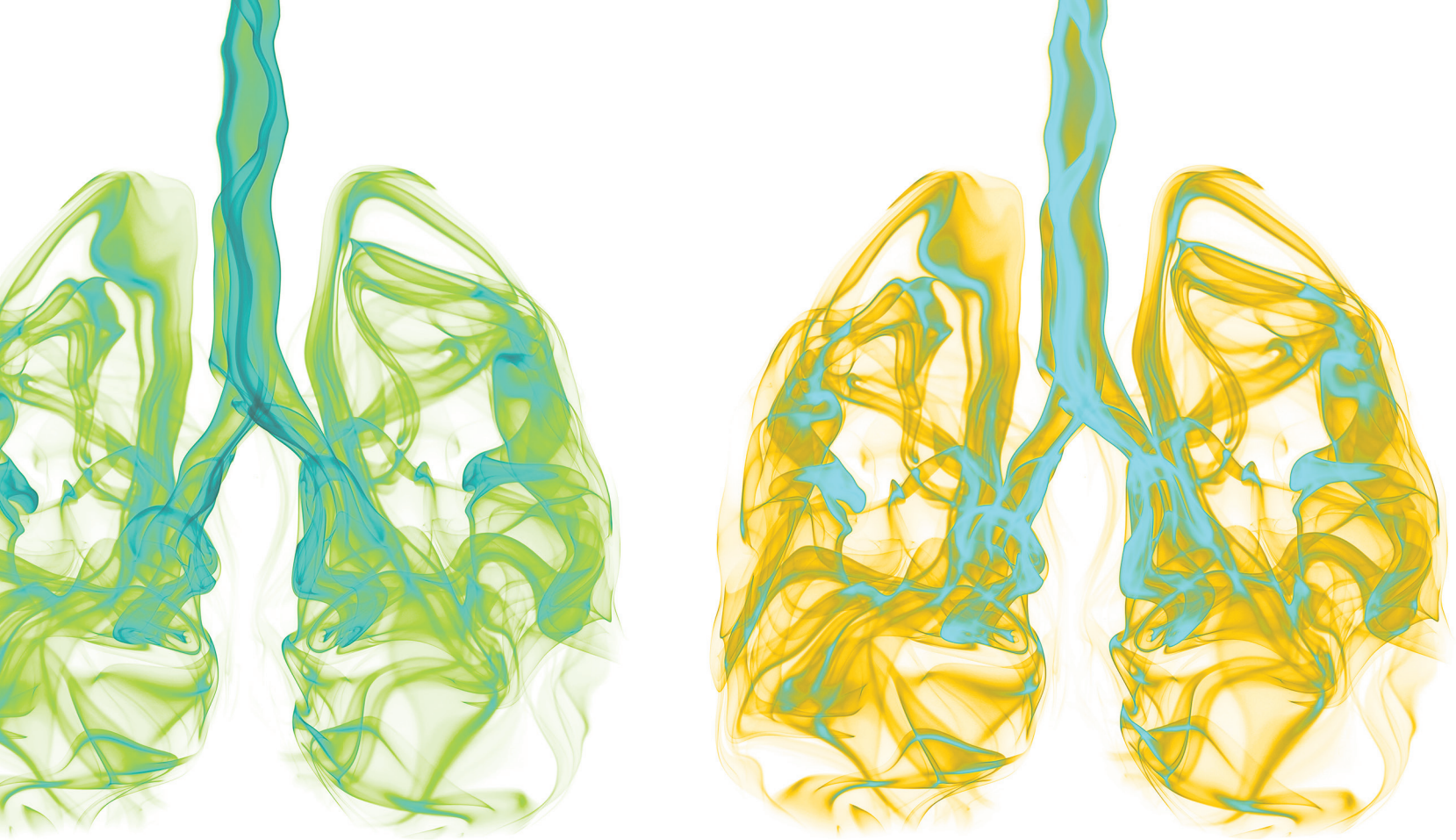
EVMS Faculty Philanthropy Champion:

**Robert Palmer, MD**

“These supporters have gone above and beyond to help EVMS,” says Richard Homan, MD, President and Provost of EVMS and Dean of the School of Medicine. “I’m very pleased to be able to honor them for all they’ve done for our school.” □

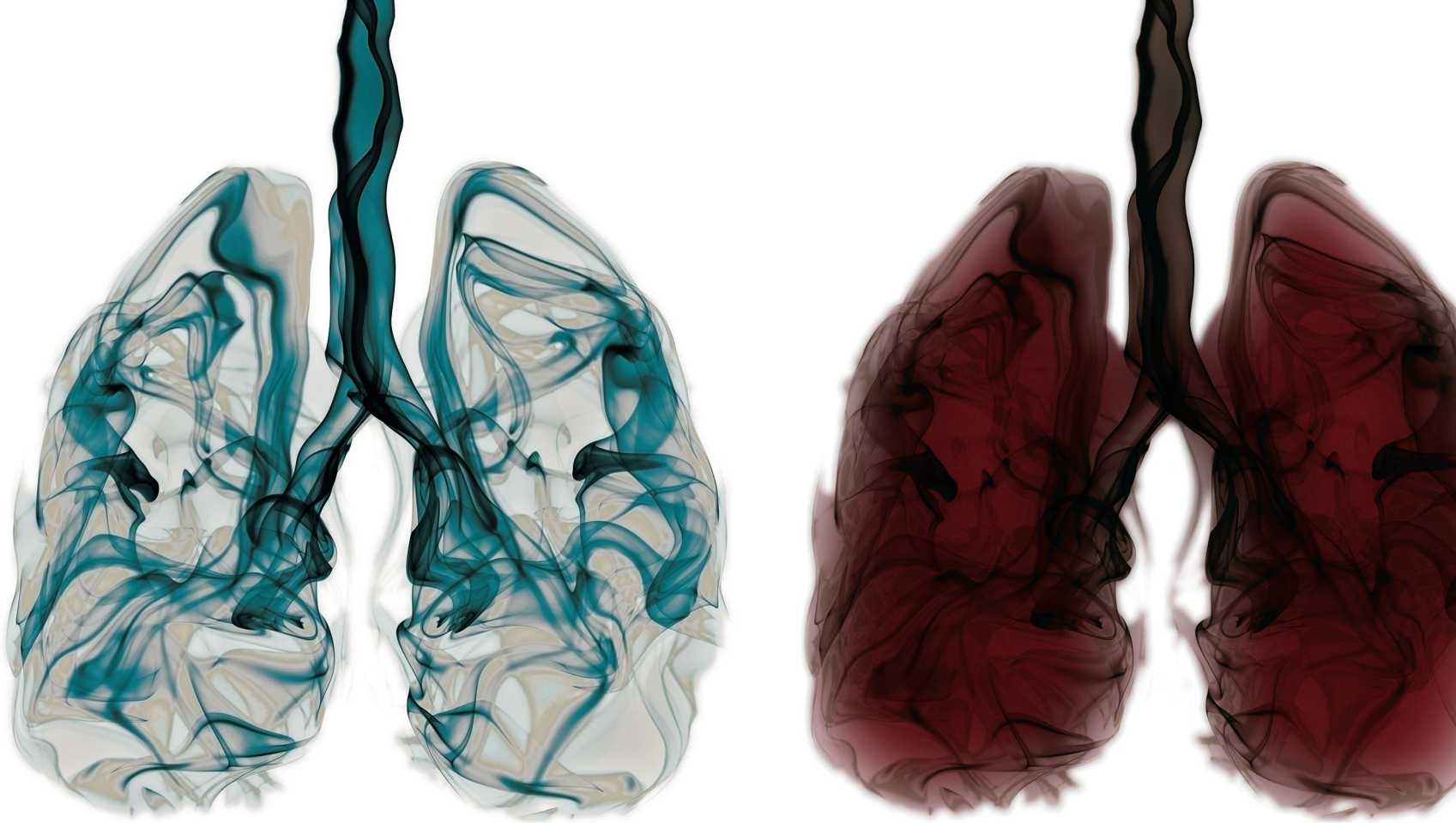
To view photos of the event, visit [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).





UP  
SMOKE





## *Harmful or harmless? EVMS researchers take on the vaping trend*

A parade of restless clouds moved along the still-gray morning sky as 13-year-old Kaylee Musick waited for the school bus. Huddled in a small group of friends, the girl pushed wisps of strawberry blond hair off her freckled face and rolled her eyes toward two teenage boys standing 20 feet to her left.

A donut-shaped puff of smoke spun upward from the center of the group. There were no cigarettes, no lighters. Only the slender metal tube of an e-cigarette wobbling between the lips of her schoolmate.

It is illegal to sell e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18 in Virginia. It is even illegal for those under 18 to be in possession of them. Still, standing there on the street corner waiting for the school bus, the boys take turns inhaling wild cherry-flavored vapors from the battery-operated device.

"Vaping is the cool thing to do right now,

so a lot of kids are trying it just to say they have," Miss Musick says. "It's new and different and I guess the flavors and the cool tricks make vaping popular."

An avid middle-school track runner, Miss Musick hasn't tried e-cigarettes. She doesn't intend to, either. With a long line of smokers in her family, she knows all too well that nicotine is an addictive substance.

"I don't see it being safe, no matter what they try to tell you," she says. "They used to say cigarettes were safe, too, right?"

### TEEN USE RISES AT ALARMING RATE

Miss Musick's disdain for vaping is in stark contrast to the growing trend of U.S. teenagers whose e-cigarette use has tripled in the last year alone. Figures recently released

by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that e-cigarette use by U.S. tweens and teens tripled in 2014 to 13.4 percent, up from just 4.5 percent in 2013. Today, an estimated 2 million high-school students and 450,000 middle-school students nationwide are experimenting with vaping.

According to the CDC survey, there is a pervasive belief among teens that vaping is a safe alternative to smoking. E-cigarette kiosks have popped up at malls and in convenience stores — places teens frequent. All of them market flavors like pina colada, cola, blueberry muffin and gummy bear, which appeal to younger consumers.

"What is alarming is that we are seeing teens picking up e-cigarettes who have never smoked before, so this is a whole new generation of smokers being created," says Kelli England Will, PhD, Associate Professor



E-cigarettes are battery-operated metal tubes that heat up flavored liquids (often marketed as “juice”) and are typically laced with nicotine. They deliver vapor when inhaled.







Nearly 8,000 flavors are available through e-cigarette websites and in non-specialty stores, including gas stations and convenience stores.

**-Virginia Department of Health**

of Pediatrics. “There has been so much successful work done to curb tobacco use and now we are seeing this trend unravel some of that work.”

Dr. Will recently was awarded a three-year, \$430,000 grant by the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth to study Hampton Roads tween and teen experiences with and perspectives on e-cigarettes. This community-wide research, which began July 1, includes partnerships with CINCH (Consortium for Infant and Child Health) and the YMCA of South Hampton Roads. Together, they are exploring why youth are picking up the vaping habit at such alarming rates. They also will develop outreach campaigns to help turn the tide on the trendiness of e-cigarettes.

“We need to get at the root of what teenagers know and what their attitudes are toward vaping,” Dr. Will says. She believes the research will lead to much more work that can be valuable at the regional, state and national levels.

Amy Paulson, MPH, Instructor of Pediatrics; Matt Herman, MPH, Instructor of Pediatrics; and Andrew Plunk, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, all from the division of Pediatrics Community Health and Research, will work with Dr. Will on the project. A 25-member Teen Advisory Council and a community panel of subject matter experts in public health and the related sciences also will play key roles in the research process.

“The power of community engagement and partnership is invaluable for this research because no one has done this type of research yet, so there are big implications nationally,” Ms. Paulson says. “We need teenagers to help us develop messages that will resonate with their peers and then tell us the best ways to reach them with those messages, whether that’s on social media or some other type of campaign.”

The YMCA of South Hampton Roads is helping to organize the Teen Council and has agreed to pilot the outreach campaigns once developed.

“When there is something of this magnitude affecting the youth of today, we know we have



a responsibility to get involved,” says Lynn Skeele-Flynn, Senior Vice President of Leadership Development for the regional YMCA. “We want to be an educational resource for teens in the community and help them to make good choices about their health and well-being.”

## TO VAPE OR NOT TO VAPE

Researchers at EVMS aren’t the only ones concerned about the rise in popularity of vaping.

Patients being seen by Joshua Sill, MD, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, are often eager to talk about alternatives to traditional cigarette use. Many ask about vaping and wonder if it is a safer option. He is hesitant to endorse patient use of e-cigarettes as a cessation tool, because, as he points out, no nicotine is still the best answer.

Especially since research from the University of Toronto finds that e-cigarettes don’t help smokers quit.

“Often people are replacing one habit for another or both vaping and smoking,” Dr. Sill says. “Plus, people — especially teenagers — are using them even if they haven’t smoked before, and that is introducing a nicotine habit where there wasn’t one to begin with.”

The 2012 Surgeon General’s Report found that about 90 percent of smokers first tried cigarettes as teens; and that about 75 percent of teen smokers continue into adulthood. National campaigns such as The Truth target ending teen cigarette use and have been lauded as highly successful. Officials like Mitch Zeller, JD, Director of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Tobacco Products, are worried about what the new statistics may indicate.

“The surge in youth use of novel products like e-cigarettes,” Mr. Zeller says, “forces us to confront the reality that the progress we have made in reducing youth cigarette smoking rates is being threatened.”

Part of the problem, experts argue, is the insufficient research on the safety or hazards of vaping. “We just don’t have the experience

of people vaping for 30 years the way we do chain smoking,” Dr. Sill says. “We may very well find out 30 years from now that it is just as problematic.”

Some recent studies found that heating the liquids in e-cigarettes to very high temperatures could release formaldehyde, a carcinogen. Medical experts have long known that nicotine taxes the cardiovascular system and can contribute to hypertension, heart attacks and strokes.

Plus, an overdose of nicotine can be toxic, especially in children. Last year the American Association of Poison Control Centers reported nearly 4,000 liquid nicotine poison cases — over half involving children younger than 6.

“As a country,” Dr. Sill says, “we have done a good job of teaching the dangers of tobacco use, but the perception that e-cigarettes are OK from an overall health perspective is a dangerous thing.”

Especially for teenagers, says Miss Musick.

“I’m lucky,” she says, “because I know from watching my grandpa and my parents that I don’t ever want to smoke, and vaping, in my mind, could lead to that. Not all my friends think like that, though. If kids think it is safe and cool, they might just try it — and that is what people should be worried about.” □



For out more about this research, visit [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).




Paul Harrell, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, joined EVMS Sept. 1. His research will involve interviewing young adults to learn about their attitudes and behaviors regarding e-cigarettes.

“We are looking to better understand what drives or deters young adults from using these devices, ultimately helping to inform policy.”



Learn more about Dr. Harrell’s research at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).





“As a country we have done a good job of teaching the dangers of tobacco use, but the perception that e-cigarettes are OK from an overall health perspective is a dangerous thing.”

**– Joshua Sill, MD,  
Associate Professor of  
Internal Medicine**

## Virginia laws on vaping

**e**-cigarettes have soared in popularity since first coming on the market in the United States around 2008. The FDA and lawmakers have struggled to keep up with the vast array of products and to develop regulations and laws to govern the sale and use of vaping devices and accessories.

In Virginia, it is illegal for a minor to purchase or possess any tobacco, nicotine vapor or alternative nicotine products, and it is illegal to sell or distribute those products to minors (Virginia Code 18.2-371.2). Public schools also must have policies in place prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes on school grounds.

Beginning in October 2015, liquid nicotine cartridges sold in Virginia must have childproof packaging with explicit labeling to help prevent accidental nicotine poisoning in children. Virginia is one of only a few states that have taken such action.

“As parents, physicians and policymakers, we need to do all we can to educate our children about the importance of healthy habits and help them make wise choices early in their lives,” says Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam, MD (MD ’84), Assistant Professor of Pediatrics. “E-cigarettes are often marketed as safer than traditional cigarettes, but not much research has been done on their long-term health effects or their potential to help traditional smokers quit. The fact remains that a tobacco- and nicotine-free lifestyle is the safest option, and we should be working together to help our young people lead healthy lives.” □

# Tough lessons lead 1990 graduate to life of service and support

At the end of her first year of medical school, Miriam Atkins, MD (MD '90), stood at a crossroads. The work had been more difficult than she had anticipated — the books, the tests more complex.



*Miriam Atkins, MD (MD '90), is a general oncologist and has practiced with Augusta Oncologist Associates in Augusta, Ga., for 15 years. She has one daughter who is in her senior year at Washington University in St. Louis.*

She was ready to give up the dream of becoming a doctor.

She decided to quit.

But then, she says, something amazing happened. Her EVMS professors, including then-Dean Robert McCombs, PhD, simply wouldn't let her.

"They told me if I dropped out, I would never know what I could have been or done. I truly believe if I had been at any other school, they would have let me just walk away," Dr. Atkins says. "But at EVMS, when they accept you, they expect you to graduate. They make sure you do what you need to do in order to get that done."

The same couldn't be said for her friends at other medical schools. Many were told at orientations and in classes to look to their left, then to their right, and to expect that only one of them would be there come commencement day, she says. The support of EVMS

faculty and their unwavering belief in her ability to excel is why today, Dr. Atkins chooses to support scholarships at her alma mater. She is a longtime member of the 1973 Society, which honors EVMS alumni who commit to giving \$2,500 or more per year for a minimum of five years to an EVMS fund of their choice.

"I am where I am because of this school," she says. "I feel that all of us who have been there have an obligation to help the doctors coming behind us."

If her support of EVMS helps even one student make the choice not to give up, Dr. Atkins says, then she is paying forward what was given to her by her EVMS family.

When you are young, you have to see people like you to know that you can do the job and make an impact," she says. "You have to know you are not on this road alone." □



# 2015 Alumni Weekend



Members of the Class of 1985 gathered to celebrate the EVMS Alumni Weekend POETS Reception.



Jennifer Mueller, MD (MD '05) and Todd Palmerton, MD (MD '85), posed for photos with former Dean of Students Robert McCombs, PhD.



Hooman Sadr, MD (MD '01), Melissa Lang, Executive Director of EVMS Alumni Relations, and Erik Lappinen, MD (MD '09), joined the fun of Alumni Weekend at the EVMS Alumni Chalet at the Town Point Virginia Wine Festival.



Todd Palmerton MD (MD '85), and F. Taylor Wootton III, MD (MD '85) caught up with each other during Alumni Weekend at the EVMS Alumni Chalet at the Town Point Virginia Wine Festival.



Hao Nguyen, MD (MD '05), Valerie Jones, MD (MD '05) and Lipika McCauley, MD (MD '05), were happy to connect with fellow alumni at the POETS Reception.



Alumni Weekend saw EVMS OB-GYN residents gather at the EVMS Alumni Chalet at the Town Point Virginia Wine Festival.

## Class notes

- **April Foster, MD** (Family & Community Medicine Residency '14), now serves as the medical director of the Western Tidewater Free Clinic.
- **William Powers IV, MD** (MD '09) joined the General Surgery Specialists practice at the New Hanover Regional Medical Center Physician Group in Wilmington, N.C. He serves as an Assistant Professor of Surgery in New Hanover Regional Medical Center's surgery residency program and provides elective general surgery and acute-care surgery services, including trauma, critical care and emergency general surgery.
- **Todd A. Theobald, MD** (Ophthalmology Residency '05), joined the practice Professional Eye Associates in Dalton, Ga. Dr. Theobald specializes in cataract surgery, the treatment of diabetic eye disease and comprehensive medical eye care.
- **Sheena H. Tonkin, MD** (Pediatrics Residency '15; Public Health Certificate '15), joined the practice Watson Clinic in Lakeland, Fla. □



*A ribbon-cutting was held in October for the new Sertoma Club of Norfolk Temporal Bone Lab at EVMS. Members of the club observed a demonstration of the lab's equipment, which will allow for enhanced instruction and education in the anatomy of the ear's temporal bone and related surgical techniques. The club's \$150,000 gift to fund the lab was the largest gift it has ever made to a nonprofit organization.*

## Donor-funded lectures focus on wellness for seniors

In September, Thomas Gill, MD, Professor of Medicine, Epidemiology and Investigative Medicine and the Humana Foundation Professor of Geriatric Medicine at Yale University, spoke on "Our Grandparents, Our Parents, Our Future Selves: Optimizing Function in Old Age" at Westminister-Canterbury in Virginia Beach.

Dr. Gill was able to bring his expertise in geriatrics to the community thanks to the generosity of the Cooke Fund of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, which established the Brock Institute Glennan Lecture Series this fall.

Last year, Rob Goodman, a friend of the late philanthropist Virginia Glennan Ferguson and adviser for Mrs. Ferguson's Cooke Fund,

attended a Brock scholar lecture and thought it was of great value to the community. When he learned that leaders of the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health and the Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology were considering hosting a Brock scholar focused on the care of elderly patients, Mr. Goodman endorsed the establishment of the Brock Institute Glennan Lecture Series.

This year's presentation promoted education about senior wellness and fall prevention, which Mr. Goodman says aligns with Mrs. Ferguson's wishes for her legacy. In 1995, Mrs. Ferguson helped establish the EVMS Glennan Center through a major philanthropic gift and made additional gifts to EVMS during her lifetime. □

*The late Virginia Glennan Ferguson continues to support EVMS through the Cooke Fund of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation.*





A black and white portrait of Dr. Howard Jones Jr., an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

## \$1 million gift from Dr. Howard Jones Jr. will fund reproductive medicine research

Howard Jones Jr., MD, the nation's father of in vitro fertilization and co-founder of the Jones Institute for Reproductive Medicine at EVMS, died July 31 at the age of 104. Now, not only will his legacy live on at EVMS because of his groundbreaking research but also because of his generosity.

Last spring, Dr. Jones and his children made a \$1 million gift to EVMS to establish an endowment known as The Jones Family Reproductive Research Medicine Fund. The gift was made in honor of Dr. Jones' late wife and lifetime research partner, Georgeanna Jones, MD.

The endowment will provide perpetual funding for research endeavors specific to reproductive endocrinology and infertility. It will ensure that the Jones Institute will continue to lead research initiatives in reproductive medicine and will play a key role in active clinical trials.

"Dr. Jones was very supportive of our research to identify biomarkers that will help increase the probability that a single embryo transfer can be successful," says Sergio Oehninger, MD, PhD, the Henry Clay Hofheimer II Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology, Vice Chair of EVMS Obstetrics and Gynecology and Director of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility at the Jones Institute.

"Dr. Jones was so humble about this gift," says Richard Homan, MD, President and Provost of EVMS and Dean of the School of Medicine. "He asked us not to make an announcement about it until after he passed away. We lost a truly great man in medicine and science when he left us, and I'm very grateful that his philanthropy will allow EVMS to continue his pioneering work." □



To learn more about Dr. Jones' legacy and current infertility research at the Jones Institute, visit [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



## Diabetes experts give Suffolk woman new outlook

On a quiet suburban cul-de-sac less than a mile from Sentara Obici Hospital, Helen Neal's yard is freshly mowed. At 74, she mows it herself with an electric push mower that her son gave her.

"Sometimes my family says I do too much," she says, smiling.

In 1995, Ms. Neal was surprised to learn she had diabetes. It was an unexpected diagnosis for someone who had always been active.

"I was retiring and looking forward to an easy, comfortable life," she says. "And then they hit me with diabetes. Well, what do you do about diabetes?" She sat at her kitchen table and gestured with her arms as she spoke.

"I panicked. I went into denial."

For several years, Ms. Neal did the bare minimum to manage her disease. She took pills and checked her blood sugar, but she didn't eat a proper diet and was still gaining weight.

*"In all the years that I've visited him, I don't think I've ever seen Dr. Lieb frown."*

"I didn't understand," she says. "And that made me kind of depressed."

It wasn't until she met David Lieb, MD, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and Medical Director of the EVMS Strelitz Diabetes Center of Western Tidewater, and started attending free educational classes that she began to understand what diabetes is and how to live a new lifestyle. A grant from Obici Healthcare Foundation established the Strelitz Diabetes Center of Western Tidewater



Helen Neal changed her outlook on diabetes after visiting EVMS experts like Dr. David Lieb, Medical Director of the Strelitz Diabetes Center of Western Tidewater.

earlier this year, making EVMS' diabetes care available regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

In 2011, Ms. Neal was diagnosed with a tumor on her pituitary gland, further complicating her diabetes. After her surgery, her hospital room filled with doctors and nurses — "all very serious and very doctor-like," she remembers.

"Yet there was one gentleman who was smiling the whole time," she says. "In all the years that I've visited him,

I don't think I've ever seen Dr. Lieb frown."

To Ms. Neal, Dr. Lieb is approachable. She feels comfortable asking him about new medications and changes in her diet. With his care, she has learned to take control of her disease and looks forward to tests to see if she's improved.

"I changed my whole outlook on diabetes after going to him the first time," she says. "The diabetes will take care of itself — if I take care of me." □



Watch Helen Neal's story online at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



*RIGHT* Physician Assistant students at EVMS celebrated National PA Week in October at a variety of events, including the Steadman Memorial Lecture held at the Naro Expanded Cinema in Norfolk.

*BELOW* A record number of participants turned out for this year's EVMS Research Day. The day-long event, held every October, gives EVMS students, residents and fellows the opportunity to showcase their research efforts. Pictured presenting his research is Cody Phelps, a Biomedical Sciences PhD student in the Class of 2019. View a video about Research Day at [evms.edu/magazine](http://evms.edu/magazine).



*ABOVE* At the Humana Rock 'n' Roll Virginia Beach Half Marathon held Sunday, Sept. 6, Team EVMS (pictured) raised more than \$10,000 for the EVMS Fund. Nearly 40 EVMS volunteers also took part in the event.

*LEFT* In October, EVMS Alumni Relations, in conjunction with EVMS Careers in Medicine, held its annual event called MASS, Military Alumni Support for Students, which brings in alumni who are military veterans to share their experiences, answer questions and help EVMS students in the military expand their networks.



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