Edgar H. Rossheim, M.D. never forgot how the Florence L. Smith Scholarship made a difference in his life. A member of the first class of Smith Scholars in 1953, Rossheim always valued how the scholarship helped him, a Portsmouth native, achieve his lifetime goal of becoming a physician.

The renewable scholarship let him attend the Medical College of Virginia (now Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine) and laid the groundwork for a 35-year practice in internal medicine and cardiology.

Rossheim regularly donated to the Smith Scholarship, writing to the Hampton Roads Community Foundation in 2010 that “this scholarship may make the difference between affordability and impossibility for some students.”

After Rossheim died in 2013, his wife and oldest daughter started donating annually to the Smith Scholarship Fund in his memory.

“This scholarship meant the world to Edgar,” Betsy Rossheim of Williamsburg says of her husband. “The study and practice of medicine were central to his life.”

Florence Smith’s Impact Is Everlasting

At the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, we love to tell the story of Florence L. Smith, the daughter of Norfolk physician Dr. Hy Smith, a former Civil War surgeon, and his wife Julia.

Florence Smith passed away in 1952 as the last living member of her family. But, she remains a life-changing philanthropist who helps people every day. Smith’s legacy endures because the charitable bequest she left to her community foundation created an endowed scholarship fund that assists long-time Virginians while in medical school.

More than 750 physicians have benefited from Smith’s generosity. There have been Smith Scholars in medical school every year since 1953, including 15 currently at Eastern Virginia Medical School, the University of Virginia School of Medicine and Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine (formerly Medical College of Virginia).

Living Smith Scholars are at various life stages – studying medicine, in residencies, practicing medicine or retired. Some have paid it forward by starting their own scholarship funds at the community foundation, their alma maters or medical schools in their communities.

Smith Scholars excel in all medical specialties. They treat patients of all ages. They also are researchers, educators, medical missionaries and health department personnel. They have led local, state and national societies, including the American Medical Association.

Through endowment growth, Smith’s original gift of $460,000 to The Norfolk Foundation has multiplied while providing more than $2.5 million in scholarships. In 2010 a merger of the Norfolk and Virginia Beach foundations created the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, which administers Smith Scholarships today.

Florence Smith created a living memorial that lets her forever shape the lives of both the physicians she helps and the patients they serve. For that we are eternally grateful. 😊
Candice Gabriel, M.D.

Pediatrician Achieves Childhood Goal

Candice Gabriel, M.D. of Norfolk always dreamed of a career in medicine. Among her prized possessions is the book she created in second grade. Words and pictures “showed I would be a pediatric doctor when I grew up,” she says.

That prediction came true for this Smith Scholar after her 2007 graduation from Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk. She completed a three-year pediatric residency at Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters and now treats children in the Hampton Roads region where she has lived her entire life.

As one of four children of a Norfolk bus driver and a high school teacher, Gabriel is grateful for the Florence L. Smith Scholarship, which she says “covered a significant portion of my medical school tuition.”

Since 2011, Gabriel has worked with young patients through Children’s Specialty Group, which is affiliated with CHKD. Two days a week she tends to newborns at Hampton Roads hospitals. On other days she focuses on pediatric gastroenterology at an out-patient clinic, and several times a month she staffs the CHKD emergency room. When not working, Candice enjoys spending time with her husband and five children.

Gabriel’s goal of becoming a pediatrician was cemented as an elementary student when her younger brother was injured in a fire. “He had third-degree burns and spent a month at CHKD,” Gabriel recalls. “It made a major impression on me seeing how much my brother was helped and how my parents hung onto his doctors’ words.”

Gabriel continued her medical focus by participating in Learning Bridge, a three-year summer program for public school students focused on success.

“That program at Norfolk Academy opened my eyes to things I had no exposure to and made me realize my goals were attainable,” she says. At Granby High School, Gabriel spent four years in a medical magnet program that took her to EVMS each week for science classes and labs.

“That reconfirmed everything I already knew,” says Gabriel, who graduated as salutatorian of her high school. She enrolled at Old Dominion University in a program that guaranteed her admission to EVMS. To stretch her limited education funds, Gabriel lived at home with her parents, did not buy a car until after medical school and carpooled with her sister Noelle Gabriel, M.D. to both ODU and EVMS.

Today, Gabriel is impressed with how Florence Smith’s legacy continues to help new generations of medical students achieve their dreams. In gratitude for the help Florence Smith gave her, Gabriel became a Smith Scholarship donor in 2018.

In 2018, four new Smith Scholars won Florence L. Smith Scholarships and joined 11 returning scholarship students. New Smith Scholars are:

Abigail E. Barger of Norfolk (EVMS)
Veronica Gray of Franklin (EVMS)
Scott L. Huang of Loudon County (VCU)
Lillian K. Waller of Loudon County (UVA)

In 2018 two Smith Scholars graduated from medical school and entered residency are:

Kendra J. Jackson (UVA) of Fairfax County, a pediatric resident at Carolinas Health System in Charlotte.

Nona M. Jiang (UVA) of Fairfax County, an internal medicine resident at Yale University in New Haven.

Smith Scholar Update

From P.1

and cardiology in Boston, Atlanta and St. Louis. He served in the Navy rising to the rank of lieutenant commander.

In 1961 Rossheim started an internal medicine and cardiology practice in Norfolk and settled in the city with his wife to raise a family. He was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of medicine, his funny stories and sharp wit, and his enjoyment of tennis and jogging.

In addition to his solo practice, Rossheim served on the medical staffs of three area hospitals. He taught students and residents at Eastern Virginia Medical School before retiring in 1996 and moving with his wife to Williamsburg.
Veronica Gray of Franklin started thinking about a medical career in high school. Shadowing her hometown doctor let her “see how medicine works in rural areas.” She solidified her career interest by going on a mission trip to Panama and Honduras with The Global Medical Brigade while studying at the College of William & Mary.

As a second-year student at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Gray is preparing for her future. Receiving scholarships like the Florence L. Smith Medical Scholarship administered by the Hampton Roads Community Foundation help lower her education costs leaving her free to pursue her goal of helping people in under-served communities.

“Because I don’t have that debt burden, I can follow my dreams,” Gray says.

To augment her studies she volunteers at the H.O.P.E.S. Free Clinic in Norfolk, sponsored by EVMS. The student-run clinic provides primary and specialty medical care to uninsured residents. As a service-learning lead, she mentors first-year medical student volunteers. She also is an EVMS student ambassador.

Mentoring fellow students and serving her community are part of Veronica’s DNA. While studying biology at William & Mary, she helped new science students adjust to college life, choose classes and do research. Her efforts won her the Biology Department Leadership Award when she graduated in 2014. This award recognized her contributions to the William & Mary biology department and the university community in the areas of academics, research, student mentoring, service and community outreach.

After finishing medical school in 2021, Gray plans to complete a family medicine residency and practice in Hampton Roads. “I want to be able to give back to my community,” she says. “It’s about what I can do to make a difference.”

Patrick Melmer, M.D., attended the UV A School of Medicine with help from a Florence L. Smith Medical Scholarship administered by the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. He is grateful the scholarship eased his financial burden because he says medical students are in a vulnerable position financially. “You work so hard to get to where you are, but there’s also so far to go.”

Born in Northern Virginia, Melmer graduated from Fauquier High School in 2008. His interest in medicine was piqued when a classmate with brain cancer was successfully treated at the University of Virginia Medical Center. That led to his decision to attend UVA for both his undergraduate and medical degrees.

While balancing a heavy pre-med course load and working as a resident assistant, Melmer found time for medical research and organizing musical therapy volunteers to play for hospital patients. As a musician, he enjoys writing songs and playing a variety of instruments. Melmer recently released his fourth album, which he classifies as “instrumental acoustic.” For him “music is my release” from the hectic schedule of a surgical resident.

After earning their undergraduate degrees, the Melmers married in 2012. He worked at a Maryland neurology sleep center for a year while she pursued a master’s degree at George Washington University. In 2013, they both enrolled at the UVA School of Medicine. After graduating in 2017, the couple started residencies at the same hospital in Myrtle Beach.

Sometimes they get to care for patients as a team when emergency room patients need surgery. “I feel so lucky that we got to go on this journey together,” he says.

As the couple explores post-residency options, he hopes they will end up working together at “a place that needs a lot of help.”

Free Clinic in Norfolk, sponsored by EVMS. The student-run clinic provides primary and specialty medical care to uninsured residents. As a service-learning lead, she mentors first-year medical student volunteers. She also is an EVMS student ambassador.

Mentoring fellow students and serving her community are part of Veronica’s DNA. While studying biology at William & Mary, she helped new science students adjust to college life, choose classes and do research. Her efforts won her the Biology Department Leadership Award when she graduated in 2014. This award recognized her contributions to the William & Mary biology department and the university community in the areas of academics, research, student mentoring, service and community outreach.

After finishing medical school in 2021, Gray plans to complete a family medicine residency and practice in Hampton Roads. “I want to be able to give back to my community,” she says. “It’s about what I can do to make a difference.”

Patrick Melmer, M.D., attended the UV A School of Medicine with help from a Florence L. Smith Medical Scholarship administered by the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. He is grateful the scholarship eased his financial burden because he says medical students are in a vulnerable position financially. “You work so hard to get to where you are, but there’s also so far to go.”

Born in Northern Virginia, Melmer graduated from Fauquier High School in 2008. His interest in medicine was piqued when a classmate with brain cancer was successfully treated at the University of Virginia Medical Center. That led to his decision to attend UVA for both his undergraduate and medical degrees.

While balancing a heavy pre-med course load and working as a resident assistant, Melmer found time for medical research and organizing musical therapy volunteers to play for hospital patients. As a musician, he enjoys writing songs and playing a variety of instruments. Melmer recently released his fourth album, which he classifies as “instrumental acoustic.” For him “music is my release” from the hectic schedule of a surgical resident.

After earning their undergraduate degrees, the Melmers married in 2012. He worked at a Maryland neurology sleep center for a year while she pursued a master’s degree at George Washington University. In 2013, they both enrolled at the UVA School of Medicine. After graduating in 2017, the couple started residencies at the same hospital in Myrtle Beach.

Sometimes they get to care for patients as a team when emergency room patients need surgery. “I feel so lucky that we got to go on this journey together,” he says.

As the couple explores post-residency options, he hopes they will end up working together at “a place that needs a lot of help.”

Free Clinic in Norfolk, sponsored by EVMS. The student-run clinic provides primary and specialty medical care to uninsured residents. As a service-learning lead, she mentors first-year medical student volunteers. She also is an EVMS student ambassador.

Mentoring fellow students and serving her community are part of Veronica’s DNA. While studying biology at William & Mary, she helped new science students adjust to college life, choose classes and do research. Her efforts won her the Biology Department Leadership Award when she graduated in 2014. This award recognized her contributions to the William & Mary biology department and the university community in the areas of academics, research, student mentoring, service and community outreach.

After finishing medical school in 2021, Gray plans to complete a family medicine residency and practice in Hampton Roads. “I want to be able to give back to my community,” she says. “It’s about what I can do to make a difference.”

Patrick Melmer, M.D., attended the UV A School of Medicine with help from a Florence L. Smith Medical Scholarship administered by the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. He is grateful the scholarship eased his financial burden because he says medical students are in a vulnerable position financially. “You work so hard to get to where you are, but there’s also so far to go.”

Born in Northern Virginia, Melmer graduated from Fauquier High School in 2008. His interest in medicine was piqued when a classmate with brain cancer was successfully treated at the University of Virginia Medical Center. That led to his decision to attend UVA for both his undergraduate and medical degrees.

While balancing a heavy pre-med course load and working as a resident assistant, Melmer found time for medical research and organizing musical therapy volunteers to play for hospital patients. As a musician, he enjoys writing songs and playing a variety of instruments. Melmer recently released his fourth album, which he classifies as “instrumental acoustic.” For him “music is my release” from the hectic schedule of a surgical resident.

After earning their undergraduate degrees, the Melmers married in 2012. He worked at a Maryland neurology sleep center for a year while she pursued a master’s degree at George Washington University. In 2013, they both enrolled at the UVA School of Medicine. After graduating in 2017, the couple started residencies at the same hospital in Myrtle Beach.

Sometimes they get to care for patients as a team when emergency room patients need surgery. “I feel so lucky that we got to go on this journey together,” he says.

As the couple explores post-residency options, he hopes they will end up working together at “a place that needs a lot of help.”
Working in a baseball dugout at Wake Forest University, Smith Scholar Michael Coates, M.D. combines two of his passions – medicine and baseball. For 17 years the former Virginia Tech baseball pitcher has been team physician for the Wake Forest baseball team. His goal is to keep all Demon Deacon baseball players healthy as they play more than 55 games each season.

Coates, a professor emeritus at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, grew up in Norfolk. He was only 10 years old when his father passed away leaving his mother to raise him and three younger siblings. He delivered newspapers and worked for an electrical contractor to help family finances while never losing sight that becoming a physician was his “vision for the future.”

The Florence L. Smith Medical Scholarship Coates received to attend what was the Medical College of Virginia “allowed me not to scrape as much or take out more loans,” he says. Knowing his scholarship came from a donor from his hometown made it even more meaningful.

Earlier scholarships helped Coates attend Norfolk Catholic High School where he was a baseball pitcher. At Tech, where he played baseball for three years, he was class vice president and led various student groups. He also worked in a biology lab and for an electrical contractor to help pay his bills. He graduated in 1970 with a biology degree and promptly enlisted in the Navy Reserves just before enrolling in medical school.

Coates chose family medicine as his specialty to treat patients across the entire age spectrum. “The most enjoyable part for me is the people – treating families you care for over the years,” he explains.

After graduating in 1974 from medical school, Coates completed a family medicine residency in Charleston. He spent two years there on active duty treating 2,500 people at a Navy clinic and served in the Navy Reserves for 30 years. For 19 years he headed the obstetrical service for families at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville. While there he earned a master’s degree in epidemiology from UVA.

Coates and his family moved to Winston-Salem in 1998 when he became chair of the Wake Forest School of Medicine’s Department of Family and Community Medicine. The position let him work with students and residents, oversee research and treat all ages of patients.

Although he retired in 2018, he continues to teach and see patients one day a week as professor emeritus. Coates loves the “opportunity to work with medical students and residents in training, and have some impact on their direction.”

In 2018, Coates, the father of three and grandfather of five, reconnected with the community foundation and made his first donation to the Florence L. Smith Medical Scholarship Fund. “If I can return the gift, I’m more than happy to,” he says. “It’s the least I can do.”

The Hampton Roads Community Foundation thanks the 35 Smith Scholars and their family members who supported the Florence L. Smith Scholarship Fund in 2018. Their generosity added $33,340 to the fund to help future physicians. The Smith Fund has a value of nearly $2.5 million. Donations ranged in size from $50 to $15,000 and came as checks, online donations and IRA transfers. The average gift size in 2018 was $1,000. We appreciate the:

- Smith Scholars and their families who have created their own scholarship funds at the community foundation: Alfred L. Schulwolf, M.D., Burton D. Goodwin, M.D., Lewis K. Martin, M.D., the late Donald E. Sly, M.D., Ashby Taylor, M.D., and Marshall Taylor, M.D.
- Smith Scholars whose estate plans include bequests for medical scholarships through the community foundation: Anonymous, Russell D. Evett, M.D., Burton D. Goodwin, M.D., Edward L. Lilly, M.D., Lewis K. Martin II, M.D., the late Donald E. Sly, M.D., the late Ruth B. Weeks, M.D. and Dorothy Urban Wright, M.D.
- Past and current Smith Scholars who gathered in Norfolk for a dinner this fall so they could get to know each other.

The Hampton Roads Community Foundation thanks the 35 Smith Scholars and their family members who supported the Florence L. Smith Scholarship Fund in 2018. Their generosity added $33,340 to the fund to help future physicians. The Smith Fund has a value of nearly $2.5 million. Donations ranged in size from $50 to $15,000 and came as checks, online donations and IRA transfers. The average gift size in 2018 was $1,000. We appreciate the:

- Smith Scholars and their families who have created their own scholarship funds at the community foundation: Alfred L. Schulwolf, M.D., Burton D. Goodwin, M.D., Lewis K. Martin, M.D., the late Donald E. Sly, M.D., Ashby Taylor, M.D., and Marshall Taylor, M.D.
- Smith Scholars whose estate plans include bequests for medical scholarships through the community foundation: Anonymous, Russell D. Evett, M.D., Burton D. Goodwin, M.D., Edward L. Lilly, M.D., Lewis K. Martin II, M.D., the late Donald E. Sly, M.D., the late Ruth B. Weeks, M.D. and Dorothy Urban Wright, M.D.
- Past and current Smith Scholars who gathered in Norfolk for a dinner this fall so they could get to know each other.

The Hampton Roads Community Foundation thanks the 35 Smith Scholars and their family members who supported the Florence L. Smith Scholarship Fund in 2018. Their generosity added $33,340 to the fund to help future physicians. The Smith Fund has a value of nearly $2.5 million. Donations ranged in size from $50 to $15,000 and came as checks, online donations and IRA transfers. The average gift size in 2018 was $1,000. We appreciate the:

- Smith Scholars and their families who have created their own scholarship funds at the community foundation: Alfred L. Schulwolf, M.D., Burton D. Goodwin, M.D., Lewis K. Martin, M.D., the late Donald E. Sly, M.D., Ashby Taylor, M.D., and Marshall Taylor, M.D.
- Smith Scholars whose estate plans include bequests for medical scholarships through the community foundation: Anonymous, Russell D. Evett, M.D., Burton D. Goodwin, M.D., Edward L. Lilly, M.D., Lewis K. Martin II, M.D., the late Donald E. Sly, M.D., the late Ruth B. Weeks, M.D. and Dorothy Urban Wright, M.D.
- Past and current Smith Scholars who gathered in Norfolk for a dinner this fall so they could get to know each other.

How to Give There are many ways to help future medical students through the Hampton Roads Community Foundation – from current gifts to bequests. Donations of all sizes are welcome. But, if your gift is $25,000 or more, you can create a named, endowed fund. Contact Lynn Watson Neumann, director of gift planning, to explore your options. Reach her at lneumann@hamptonroadscf.org or (757) 622-7951.