

# Norman Mette's

# Dream



Mette Foundation trustees, from left, **Paul Hoenle**, head of the Johnson Smith Company in Bradenton, Florida; **Marilynn Knickerbocker**, a niece of Norman Mette and a nurse at Lansing's Sparrow Hospital; **John Snyder**, a vice president of Comerica Bank and vice president of the Mette Foundation; and **Karl Schettenhelm Jr.**, an attorney with the Southfield law firm of Raymond & Prokop

His attorney, Karl W. Schettenhelm Jr., describes the late Norman H. Mette as a "very simple man, the kind of man who was embarrassed to say things about himself." Mette, a frugal man who in his later years lived in a one-room apartment in the area of Detroit known as the Cass Corridor, did, however, have a dream. Thanks to his dream, more than 100 students in the the University of Michigan Medical School and School of Dentistry have, over the past two decades, received more than \$1.4 million in scholarship funds from the foundation in his name that he set up before his death in 1987, with about \$1.1 million of the total going to the Medical School.

Mette had attended the University of Michigan for a single semester in the early 1930s, but in that Depression-era time did not have the funds to continue. The University represented for him, Schettenhelm says, the kind of excellence he aspired to and found in those who provided him with medical and dental care.

Though he lived into his 90s, Mette did not enjoy a healthy life. He underwent his first surgery for cancer at the age of 37, after which he was never able to work again, and underwent another seven surgeries for cancer over his lifetime. His niece, Marilynn Knickerbocker, a nurse at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, remembers her uncle staying at her family's house during his many recuperations.

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"You don't need to thank the Mette Foundation," Schettenhelm said to this year's recipients, known as the Mette Scholars, who gathered with the trustees of the Mette Foundation for an annual dinner held in March at the Michigan League. "Just think of every one of your patients as another Norman Mette, a man whose quality of life was immeasurably enhanced by the kindnesses and the dedication shown to him by his doctors and dentists."



**Karl Schettenhelm Jr.** (center) with Mette Scholars **Alice Lin** (left), a first-year student, and third-year student **Kama Tillman**

First-year medical student **Keith Hardy** with **Sharon Snyder** of Grosse Pointe Farms



How did he amass the funds to leave such a legacy to the Medical School? “He was extremely frugal,” Knickerbocker says. “He pinched pennies. And he made wise investments in the stock market. His brother, a successful Detroit architect with whom he lived for many years — neither of them ever married — left his estate to Norman, and he wisely invested that money and his own money, some of which he may have made mining out West in his 20s.” The brothers’ parents, Knickerbocker says, came to the U.S. from Germany, and the boys grew up as part of a large family in the town of Hancock in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, where their father was the town banker.



**James Woolliscroft, M.D.**, executive associate dean of the Medical School, with **Carmen Colby** and **Amrit Kaur**



From left, **Carmen Colby**, director of financial aid for the Medical School, with Mette Scholars including fourth-year student **Amrit Kaur**, second-year student **Alexander Lin** and second-year student **Michelle Berg**



From left, **Rachel Glick, M.D.**, associate dean of student programs in the Medical School; **Joyce Wahr, M.D.**, assistant dean for admissions and financial aid in the Medical School; **John Snyder** and **Marilynn Knickerbocker**