

*“Today...the need to support our diverse student population is greater than ever before.”*  
—Jeffrey Clark

Photos by Martin Vloet

# Building the Next Generation of African-American Physicians

The Fitzbutler Jones Society reaffirms its commitment to scholarship support

**O**n September 8, 2002, the Fitzbutler Jones Society, an organization of African-American U-M Medical School alumni/ae, former residents and fellows, gathered with guests at the Henry Ford Estate in Dearborn to reaffirm the Society’s mission of preparing the next generation of African-American physicians. Fitzbutler Jones committee members Lorna Thomas (M.D. 1983) and Jeffrey Clark (M.D. 1982) each spoke to the need for scholarship support and mentors for current and future U-M Medical School students. “Today, as you know, the cost of medical education has become far less affordable,” said Clark, “and the need to support our diverse student population is greater than ever before.”

U-M President Mary Sue Coleman, Ph.D., addressed Society members at the event, as did Medical School Dean Allen Lichter (M.D. 1972). Coleman, after expressing the value mentors have had in her own life, challenged the crowd: “You had people who, at a critical time in your life, stepped up and did something for you. You can step up now, and do things for the young students who are in this room.”

Dean Lichter presented some startling statistics about the decline in interest in the field of medicine, not only at the U-M but nationwide, and cited the overwhelming cost of medical education as the main factor. “Eighty-five percent of our medical students cross the stage of Hill Auditorium at the time of their graduation in debt,” said Lichter, “and the average debt exceeds \$100,000.” According to Lichter, in 1994-95, 3,539 African-Americans applied to medical school nationally, and that number declined to 2,887 in 2001. Likewise, he said, the national African-American medical student population has dwindled from 5,384 in 1996-97, to 4,779 in 2001.



William Henry Fitzbutler



Sophia Bethena Jones



From left to right: Lonnie Joe Jr., Lorna Thomas, Dean Allen Lichter, President Mary Sue Coleman, Will Johnson, Elayne Arterbery, Jeffrey Clark, Velva Clark and David Gordon

During his speech, Lichter took the opportunity to recognize Will Johnson, the first scholar to receive support from the Fitzbutler Jones Society in the form of an annual gift from committee member Elayne Arterbery (M.D. 1988). Johnson, a second-year medical student at the U-M, said, "I am very grateful for Dr. Arterbery's scholarship support. Not only does it assist me financially, but it lets me know that she has faith in my ability to succeed in medical school, and that she would like to help ensure my success."

Representing the achievements of African-American medical students at the U-M, past and present, the last names of William Henry Fitzbutler (M.D. 1872) and Sophia Bethena Jones (M.D. 1885), the first African-American graduates of the U-M Medical School, were chosen for the organization in 1997. Fitzbutler moved to Louisville, Kentucky, after graduating from the U-M, and lobbied the Kentucky legislature to allow the establishment of a medical school that could not exclude applicants because of color. He ran the resulting Louisville National Medical College and hospital for more than two decades, and three of his and his wife, Sarah's, six children went on to become physicians themselves. Upon her graduation, Jones joined the faculty at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and instituted the Nurse Training Course there. She went on to practice medicine in St. Louis, Philadelphia and Kansas City, and devoted her life to promoting the good health of African-Americans.

Fitzbutler Jones committee members in attendance included Arterbery; Clark; Thomas; Lonnie Joe Jr. (M.D. 1978); Linda Gillum, Ph.D., U-M assistant provost for academic affairs; and David Gordon, M.D., professor of pathology in the Medical School and assistant dean for diversity and career development.

—MF



Guests Joseph Tworek (M.D. 1992), Kenneth Jamerson (M.D. 1986), and Stephanie Patterson (M.D. 1990, Residency 1994)



Second-year medical student and Fitzbutler Jones scholarship recipient Will Johnson with Elayne Arterbery, whose gift provides the support Johnson receives