

## \$2.5 Million Endows Robert A. Knox Professorship

Money will advance public health research and care

Each year, 10 million children under the age of six die in the developing world from preventable causes. That figure comes, curiously, from an investment banker, Robert A. Knox, whose career might lead you to think he wouldn't carry such a grim statistic in his head. But Cornerstone Equity Investors, the firm BU Board of Trustees chair Knox (CAS'74, GSM'75) helped found, invests one-quarter of its portfolio in businesses involved in health care, a lifelong interest of its senior managing director.

"My mother was a nurse, and she hoped I'd be a doctor," says Knox, whose travels in Africa, India, and China allowed him to see the devastating health problems of underresourced countries. "I disappointed her."

Now the Robert and Jeanne Knox Foundation has given BU \$2.5 million to create a professorship named for Robert Knox. Jonathon Simon, a School of Public Health professor and chair of international health, is the inaugural

Robert A. Knox Professor. Simon, who leads BU's interdisciplinary Center for Global Health & Development (CGHD), has spent a quarter century battling childhood illnesses and death in the developing world. His appointment took effect on July 1.

Simon says the gift will support the center's Global Urban Health initiative, which exists to improve the health of the world's burgeoning and beleaguered city-dwelling poor.

"If you spend 10 minutes with Simon and you're not inspired, you've got to be a soulless person," Knox says. When he first learned about the CGHD, he says, he "was just blown away by how powerful it is" in mustering the intellectual artillery of BU's various schools. "Jon taps into the best talent and the best thinking from across the University," says Knox, who was struck by how Simon has been able to leverage big health improvements in poor communities from the most mundane of strategies: "Jon is interested in ways to train community health workers or birth attendants to address the very common things that result in these huge infant mortality rates...simple things like having blankets when babies are born so they're warm."

Simon estimates that as much as 80 percent of the 10 million annual childhood deaths in the developing world might be averted by such elementary health care. "Bob and Jeanne Knox's generosity will assist the center in its mandate to answer important health and development questions that directly reduce the unnecessary and avoidable deaths" of babies and mothers, he says. "If we do our job well, the Knox gift will be a gift that keeps on giving in terms of improved health of vulnerable populations worldwide." RB

## SMG Given \$10 Million for Two Chairs



Allen Questrom

Second big gift from the Allen & Kelli Questrom Foundation

ALLEN QUESTROM (SMG'64), RETIRED chief executive officer of several of the nation's largest department and specialty stores and a member of the BU Board of Trustees, and his wife, Kelli, have made a second major gift to the University. They have given \$10 million from the Allen & Kelli Questrom Foundation to the School of Management, which Allen Questrom credits with launching his 39-year career as a leader in retail management.

The \$10 million gift will endow two professorships and kick-start plans for a new School of Management executive education center, according to Kenneth Freeman, the Allen Questrom Professor and Dean of SMG. "This represents one of the most significant gifts in the history of the School of Management, as we approach our 100th anniversary



Robert Knox

CYDNEY SCOTT

CYDNEY SCOTT



On Christmas morning, Miri's gifts included a \$100 donation to the Bat Lab.

# A Christmas Wish from a Young Bat Fan

\$100 will work to save bats from white-nose syndrome

in 2013," says Freeman. While details of the endowed chairs are being worked out, he says, the professorships will have many indirect impacts as the faculty increases its emphasis on ethics in business. "That's the beauty of the Questrom name, which is synonymous with business success, business results, and the highest integrity," says Freeman, describing Questrom as "an icon of corporate America."

"We are grateful that Allen and Kelli Questrom share with us a vision for the future of the School of Management and that they are willing to so generously help make our aspirations a reality," says BU President Robert A. Brown. "Their gift will help to attract and support distinguished faculty members and to seed the fundraising for a new extension to the school's facilities. Together, these initiatives will further strengthen the quality of the education available to our students and help place the School of Management in the forefront of business schools worldwide."

This is the Questroms' second major gift to SMG. In 2007, the Allen & Kelli Questrom Foundation gave \$4 million for the school's endowed deanship and professorship. Former SMG Dean Louis Lataif (SMG'61, Hon.'90), who retired in 2010, was the first Allen Questrom Professor and Dean, the chair now held by Freeman. The chair is the only endowed deanship at BU. Questrom is a former chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the J. C. Penney Company, Neiman Marcus, Barneys New York, and Federated Department Stores, Inc., which today is known as Macy's.

"I wouldn't have found a fitting career in retailing without BU, so I have a very clear responsibility to give back," says Questrom, who studied finance and marketing, but had no idea what he wanted to do until he excelled in an elective course in retailing. He says his SMG course work gave him a substantial academic edge, and he went on to legendary success, restoring to health several retail corporations, and saving and creating thousands of jobs.

SUSAN SELIGSON

One day in fall 2011, Lynn Parrucci was surprised to find her seven-year-old daughter, Miriam, crying at her computer.

"I'm writing a letter to Santa," Miriam explained, "but I can't spell syndrome."

"I spelled it for her," Parrucci recalls, "then it hit me: wait, why does Miri need to know how to spell syndrome in a letter to Santa?"

Miri told her mother that in school she had learned about white-nose syndrome, a disease that has been killing bats, and about BU's Kunz Bat Lab, part of the Center for Ecology & Conservation Biology, and its efforts to understand and eradicate the disease.

A fan of bats since she was "probably two years old"—her mother had read *Stellaluna* to her, and she fell in love with the eponymous fruit bat—Miri was heartbroken to hear that her beloved mammals were dying. So, she decided to turn to the one person she knew could help: Santa Claus.

"Dear Santa, My biggest Christmas wish is to save the bats," she wrote. "There are many bats that are getting very sick from a disease called white-nose syndrome. I really hope that they can get better. I love bats. This is my really, really biggest Christmas wish, and I want you to do that. Thank you."

Miriam's parents were touched by her efforts, but they tried to set a few things straight. "My husband tried to explain to her that bats aren't really Santa's expertise—his line of work being toys," Parrucci says. But Miriam wasn't buying it: "He's got the magic, Dad!"

COURTESY OF THE PARRUCCI FAMILY



Miriam Parrucci

When a local radio announcer posed an on-air question—"What's the most surprising thing your child asked Santa for?"—Parrucci emailed the producer, who invited Miri to be on the radio.

"People started sharing all sorts of links and news about bats with us and sending Miri articles," Parrucci says.

On Christmas morning, Miri came downstairs to find her gifts: a toy bat, a children's book on bats, and a letter from Santa explaining that a donation of \$100 had been made in her name to the Bat Lab. "Because you were brave to share your love of bats with your friends and your community," the letter read, "your Christmas wish spread."

Now Miriam has another wish: to be a bat biologist when she grows up.

CAITLIN CUSHMAN