Pharmacy alumni are advocates of community pharmacy practice

by Tressa Rockwood
Director of Development

Serving as the Director of Development for the Idaho State University College of Pharmacy, Tressa Rockwood has had the opportunity to visit many of our alumni who have taken time to talk with her about their education, career paths since leaving ISU and their satisfaction with their life and work.

According to Rockwood, the information alumni share is not only fascinating, but also important to the University as it seeks to continually improve upon our educational goals and outcomes.

Some of the most fulfilled alumni are proprietors of community pharmacies. A community pharmacy is usually described as a retail setting, offering care for ambulatory patients and many other services that require a well-trained and enthusiastic pharmacist. Some alumni independently own a single store, while others have larger regional chains of two to almost 30 stores.

These community pharmacy owners are entrepreneurs. They have taken risks. They have succeeded and have “customized” their own careers.

While they have had their share of difficult decisions and struggles with the rising cost of pharmaceuticals and managed care provisions prevalent today, they are in a position to use cutting edge services to gain customers. These alumni have spectacular stories to tell.

Mr. Victor Allen, ’78, owns and operates Vic’s Family Pharmacy. He owns two stores in southwest Idaho - one in Nampa, and one recently opened in Kuna. Allen advocates the presence of the community pharmacy by encouraging students of pharmacy to consider employment in a community pharmacy setting.

He also enjoys the challenge of owning and operating his own business. This allows him to provide progressive services to his customers, he said. Allen also enjoys being the key decision maker, which he said allows him to respond quicker to change as needed. He prides his

Dean Steiner to attend Harvard leadership development program


The Harvard leadership program, designed for experienced administrators including deans, provosts and university vice presidents, will focus on effective leadership, management challenges, business planning and managing organizational changes.

One area of change facing the College of Pharmacy is the process of executing a new curriculum that was implemented in the fall of 2002.
stores offerings of prescription compounding services, wellness and nutrition programs, diabetic counseling and a variety of other services.

“The community pharmacist is empowered to present a voice to his or her customer directly,” Allen said. “It is tremendously rewarding to be available as an owner and a community pharmacist to your customers. That is one of the big differences.”

Another fascinating story of our alumni comes from the Fuchs family of Twin Falls, Idaho.

Doug, ‘97, Daniel, ‘85, and Kenneth, ‘93, Fuchs, three brothers and sons of Mary Lou and Richard Fuchs, a 1960 College of Pharmacy Alumnus, each followed their father in careers in pharmacy.

Richard founded the first Dick’s Pharmacy in Twin Falls, Idaho in 1975. Today, this family of ISU alumni own and operate Dick’s Pharmacy in partnership with Mr. Kent Alexander, R.PH. Their chain has grown to four stores in southern Idaho. They pride themselves on the personal attention offered, speed and efficiency of dispensing and the quality of information provided to their customers. They offer a list of services that include Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement alternatives, medications through transdermals, customized capsules and much more to meet each customer’s specific need. The company also includes a division offering Home IV Services, durable medical equipment and much more.

Mr. Sid Fry, a 1963 ISU Alumnus recently said, “I always wanted to have my own business and given the option of working for someone or a big company, versus working for myself, I would always opt for being the owner/operator.”

“I’m a small town person, and Sitka, Alaska, with its roughly 7,000 people was just my bag of tea”.

Fry holds a degree in business as well as pharmacy and has used both to their fullest potential. From 1963 to 1989 Fry worked in Sitka, eventually owning the towns’ two stores where he also obtained and managed the drugs for the Pioneer Home and the Community Hospital.

Fry recalls the time he stayed open all night because a cruise ship had caught fire and later sunk off Baranof Island. The passengers were rescued by the Coast Guard, but most had lost their belongings, including prescription medications, cosmetics and toiletries.

“Our job was to find out what they had lost, give it to them if we had it and have them sign for payment later” Fry said. “We worked together with the local doctors to fill prescriptions for enough medication to get people safely home.”

While stories like Fry’s may not be encountered by all pharmacy owners, one common thread found among those who own or work for a community pharmacy includes the building of relationships and offering quality service to others.

Other noteworthy aspects of the community pharmacy include wellness and nutrition programs, Home Health Care, Home Infusion, Health Screenings and, the freedom to make decisions allowing enhanced personal and professional development.

According to the National Community Pharmacists Association, there are nearly 25,000 single-store independent pharmacies, independent chains, independent franchises and independent pharmacist-owned supermarket pharmacies in the U.S.

This constitutes for 44% of the 55,581 pharmacies in the U.S. The decline of the independent pharmacies has ended. The number of pharmacies has topped 24,500 for the last three-years and about 21% of independent owners own two or more pharmacies.
Although the new curriculum for students seeking a Doctor of Pharmacy degree has been evolving for some time, the Dean said, managing these changes is a long-term process.

“New curriculums are continually evaluated to make sure we meet our objectives,” he said. “That in itself is the concept of managing organizational change.”

MLE participants also learn to adapt to new technologies, student populations and sources of competition and to evaluate new alliances and opportunities. University administrators from the international arena of academics also will attend.

“Although I do a lot of work with pharmacy education, this is a good chance for me to be involved with academic administrators from a cross section of disciplines,” Dean Steiner said. “It will be interesting to see what challenges other administrators are managing and how they may respond to issues differently outside of the U.S.”

About 80 academic administrators were invited to partake in the MLE program after meeting detailed application criteria. ISU President Dr. Richard Bowen and Dr. Jonathan Lawson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, provided letters of support as part of Steiner’s application process to attend the institute.

Faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Education served on the selection committee for participants.

Dean Steiner is the only dean from a college of pharmacy attending this year’s institute.

“I look forward to leaning more about academic administration to assist me in doing my job better,” he said.

Additional topics of the MLE program include:

* Faculty roles and rewards
* Form partnerships for distance learning
* Strategic budgeting
* Identifying enduring institutional values and symbolic leadership

Tickets available for ISU vs. BSU Sept. 6 game

All College of Pharmacy alumni and friends are invited to attend the “Go Bengals” tailgate party prior to kickoff of the ISU Bengal versus BSU Bronco football game in Boise on September 6th.

Come and help us support the Bengals at our pre-game rally at The Stone House, 709 Park Blvd. at 3p.m.

The College of Pharmacy and ISU Alumni Association has reserved a blocked section of seats for the game. Anyone interested in purchasing tickets for the Pharmacy & ISU Alumni and friends section, please call Tressa Rockwood at 208-282-3655.

The College of Pharmacy, in an upcoming Refill and Summer Bulletin, will be offering shirts with University logos to purchase in support of ISU.

We hope to see you cheering on the Bengals in Boise on Sept. 6th.