Taking the Plunge to Help Others

Tim Ioannides, M.D. ’93, gives his all to patients, his alma mater, and even strangers

It was clear to Tim Ioannides, M.D. ’93, that the car he had watched plummet into the emerald green water of Biscayne Bay would sink from view in a matter of seconds. It was equally clear that the other 30 or so incredulous onlookers on the Fifth Street bridge in South Beach had no intention of aiding the dazed, elderly couple fleeing inside their still-floating vehicle.

So the second-year University of Miami Miller School of Medicine student yanked off his T-shirt and sandals and dove 15 feet into Biscayne Bay. Dodging remnants of a roadside construction barrier the automobile had crashed through to reach the water, Ioannides began to swim as swiftly as his 26-year-old arms and legs would carry him.

What Ioannides and two more young men who finally followed his lead did was to clamber onto the bobbing vehicle and frantically smash out its rear window with a rock. That enabled them to extricate the terrified occupants just as the car was beginning to disappear beneath the water.

Less anyone think this is something Ioannides recounts casually and without prompting, it was revealed only after he was asked for indelible memories from his medical school days.

Going the extra mile is par for the course for Ioannides, now a successful Port St. Lucie dermatologist specializing in skin cancer. It’s what he does for strangers, patients—even the canine division of the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office.

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“Tim, your dad is a great man,” the impressed plumber offered. “I’ve been doing this for 15 years, and I’ve never had a doctor ask me if I needed help!”

Another guiding light for Ioannides was his mother, who also relied on the medical profession for her livelihood and had an equally strong ethos of helping others. A Bascom Palmer Eye Institute technician when Ioannides was growing up, Andrea Ioannides also impressed upon her son the importance of family.

Ioannides enrolled at UM after graduating from Coral Park Senior High. After earning a B.S. in chemistry in 1988, to practically no one’s surprise he enrolled in UM’s Miller School of Medicine. He didn’t regret the decision.

“At the Miller School, they teach you to think like a doctor,” Ioannides says. “I know they say other medical schools do it too, but from what I’ve seen of other medical schools, they don’t do it nearly so early or so well.

“I was impressed that Dr. Byers stopped at the accident scene, because some physicians are too worried about their still-floating vehicle. The dogs work with the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office from time to time to help train its canine unit officers. Not long ago, Ioannides even bought expensive bulletproof canine vests for the unit, after a police dog was shot and killed.

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Ioannides noted that a physician had stopped and offered her assistance after the couple was brought back to shore. When Ioannides began his trauma surgery rotation, he encountered her again—Patricia Byers, M.D., a trauma surgery professor.

“He loves Port St. Lucie because its pace is more leisurely than Miami and it affords his two highly trained German shepherds plenty of room to frolic with their masters. The dogs work with the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office from time to time to help train its canine unit officers. Not long ago, Ioannides even bought expensive bulletproof canine vests for the unit, after a police dog was shot and killed.

Life is good for the newlywed dermatologist, who’s looking to start a family with his new bride, Cammy Jo. Ioannides says he owes the Miller School a debt of gratitude for the gratifying lifestyle he enjoys today.

“The Miller School of Medicine gave me and my classmates a lot,” says Ioannides, whose father passed away in 2003. “It gave us an education, a profession, and a way to support our families. By giving back, you’re helping other people to do the same things.

“I think when Miller School grads hear that someone gave a large donation to the medical school, they think a smaller one won’t be important,” Ioannides continues. “But regular, small donations are what keep the Miller School of Medicine going. Over a 30- or 40-year practice lifetime, it ends up being a six-figure donation and helps every bit as much.”

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‘Defender of the Innocents’

Walter F. Lambert, M.D. ’85, helps thousands of Florida’s most vulnerable children

ew, if any, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine graduates have followed career paths comparable to that of Walter F. Lambert, M.D. ’85. As the medical director of UM’s Child Protection Team, Lambert, 51, helps ensure that justice is meted out to those who harm Florida’s youngest citizens. It’s a line of work that occasionally brings him in contact with child abuse so horrific it repulses hardened lawmen and gives Lambert nightmares.

Tasked with safeguarding children in Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys, Lambert recently received the Florida Bar Foundation’s Medal of Honor Award, the Florida legal profession’s loftiest kudo.

“Dr. Lambert has been called the ‘Defender of the Innocents,’ says Miami attorney John Thornton, president of the Florida Bar Foundation. “He carefully and passionately examines children who have been afflicted with abuse that would bring most of us to tears. Dr. Lambert’s expert testimony has helped bring justice to Florida’s littlest victims.”

Lambert initially had reservations about accepting the Medal of Honor Award. “I don’t think you should get recognized for doing what your life’s calling is,” says Lambert, a devout Catholic who works out of an office with roughly 20 other UM Child Protection Team members.

However, Lambert’s embarrassment quickly turned to pride once he attended the award ceremony with his father in tow. The elder Lambert, also attending the award ceremony with his doctor son, commented that he was very happy with what his son did. Lambert adds, “In fact, I really thought I was going to take over my dad’s practice.”

After finishing his pediatrics residency at Jackson Memorial Hospital, Lambert got thrown a curveball—UM offered him a position as the Child Protection Team’s medical director. With his father’s blessing, on July 1, 1988, Lambert settled into the only job he’s held since his days as a Jackson resident. It’s hardly as though pediatricians were clamoring to fill the position, Lambert chuckles. “Nobody wants my job,” Lambert laughs.

One of the main reasons is because people who deal with child abuse day in and day out tend to burn out, he observes. “People who don’t fall into two groups: those who are sort of spiritual and those with the ability to laugh at the ridiculousness of it all,” says Lambert, adding that he’s held his dream position since 1988.

“The Holy Spirit put it there. I have the greatest job in the world, because every day is different,” he says. “Most importantly, I work with the most incredible group of people who have a really hard job, and they never get recognized,” Lambert continues, his voice cracking with emotion. “I’m not saying that I don’t work hard, but they never get credit for what they do. They’re the real heroes.”

The UM Child Protection Team investigates about 1,200 to 1,500 child abuse cases annually from Miami-Dade and Monroe counties and is primarily funded by the Florida Department of Health. Lambert says additional money is needed to enable his colleagues to attend training sessions pertaining to child abuse.

“The other thing that we’re always looking for is new toys—not stuffed animals, but items for teenagers and pre-teens,” Lambert says.

Contributions to the UM Child Protection Team can be sent to: UM-CPT, Maryela Suarez, 1150 N.W. 14th Street, Room 212, Miami, Florida 33136.

F or the last decade or so, Michael A. Kolber, M.D. ’83, has been the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine’s director of Adult HIV Services and associate chief of infectious diseases. Plus, he’s been a professor of medicine for two years.

Kolber’s responsibilities became even more jampacked in August when he agreed to assume medical directorship of the Comprehensive AIDS Program, in addition to his aforementioned duties. Instead of viewing his expanded bailiwick as daunting or intimidating, Kolber approaches his new duties with enthusiasm and excitement. “I’ve been sort of an idealist my whole life,” says Kolber, who also has a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Illinois. “We become doctors to make a difference. The only way you can make a difference, if you will, is by helping others.”

As the medical head of the Comprehensive AIDS Program, Kolber has made improving clinical care to patients with HIV a top priority. Another is increasing funding in that area.

“T’m out to secure basic science grants, in addition to grants that will support our patient population here,” Kolber says. “Plus, we haven’t done a very good job in HIV of going out and looking for endorsement giving.”

Kolber heads a team of nine people and says he wants to add more staff to the Comprehensive AIDS Program. But first a strategic plan must be formulated in conjunction with the program’s executive committee, he adds. After graduating from medical school in 1983, Kolber performed his residency training at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He’s been a medical staff fellow at the National Institutes of Health’s Experimental Immunology Branch and has published more than 40 peer-reviewed papers.

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*Prez gifts are graduate or post graduate scholarships.
Building on Our History to Be the Best

I t is a pleasure to extend greetings to you as I begin my term as presi- dent of the Medical Alumni Association. For starters, I inherited a rich history of research and accom- plishments that have made the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine one of Amer- ica’s finest medical schools. Add to that a vibrant alumni base and a generous family of donors, and it becomes clear why I feel so honored to have been chosen for this position.

I also extend my sincere thanks to Alfred H. Rivera, M.D. ’81, our immediate past president, for his lead- ership and commit- ment over the past three years. Besides pres- iding over alumni board meetings and representing the Medical Alumni Association at various campus events, Al attended numerous regional alumni programs.

I am determined to build on our medical school’s history and accom- plishments in the course of striving to make our institution one of the very best in the country. I want all potential medical students to know that a world-class education awaits them in Miami, just as it awaited you.

Your alumni association’s Board of Directors is an enthusiastic and diverse group that met in July to plan for the upcoming year. Among other things, the board contemplated a wonderful schedule of events for this year’s Medical Alumni Weekend, which will take place March 7-9, 2008. I encour- age you to come and see the medical campus for yourself. It will enhance your pride as an alumnus and renew your connection to the medical school.

We have many exciting times ahead as we begin this new era with Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D., at the helm. I hope that you will attend as many of the medical school’s local and regional alumni events as possible. Also, please visit our Web site at www.med.miami.edu/alumni regularly, and stay in touch with friends and classmates through our online community.

I look forward to serving you for the next two years.

Jerry Perez, M.D. ’81

New leadership: Jerry Perez, M.D. ’81, is committed to having the Medical Alumni Association strengthen ties with all graduates in the course of helping their alma mater.
1960s
William J. Morton, M.D. ’62, has retired more than 30 years as a urologist in Atlanta, Georgia. He has also been a licensed attorney in Georgia for over 20 years and was recently sworn in as a magistrate judge in Fulton County, Georgia.

1980s
Matthew O. Pompos, M.D. ’88, was a member of the second class of six-year medical students and completed general surgery and cardiothoracic training at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. He currently practices in Dallas as a general surgeon and certified wound specialist treating complex wounds.

1990s
Paul H. Ting, M.D. ’92, has been promoted to associate professor of anesthesiology, for a record four years. Ting was a member of the second class of six-year medical students and completed general surgery and cardiothoracic training at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. He currently practices in Dallas as a general surgeon and certified wound specialist treating complex wounds.

2000s
Craig D. Gordon, M.D. ’02, completed his rheumatology fellowship at Duke Medical Center in June. Gordon, who concurrently earned an M.B.A. from Duke while completing his fellowship, accepted a position with the Manhattan investment-banking firm Cowen and Company in July. Adam L. Blumenberg, M.D. ’04, is finishing the last year of his anesthesia residency at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. Named chief resident for the 2007-2008 year, Blomberg would like to do a pediatric anesthesia fellowship. Danielle Lauren Scher, M.D. ’07, is a captain in the U.S. Army who will be doing a five-year residency in orthopaedic surgery at William Beaumont Army Medical Center, El Paso, Texas. Inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society, Scher is a 2003 graduate of Vassar College.

In Memoriam
Mark Gordon, M.D. ’83, passed away on February 14, 2007, in Providence, Rhode Island. After earning his medical degree from the University of Miami, Cardozo was an internist and family practitioner in Tampa. He had moved back to Rhode Island to be with his family following the death of his father.

Jaswant S. Pannu, M.D. ’67, died June 9, 2007, in Fort Lauderdale. An ophthalmologist, Pannu invented and patented the universal intraocular lens that is used during cataract surgery to avoid injury to delicate eye tissue. After serving an ophthalmology residency at Evanston Hospital in Illinois, in 1971 he opened the Pannu Laser Institute in Fort Lauderdale.

Morris Rockstein, Ph.D., a former professor at the Miller School of Medicine, passed away June 19, 2007, in Coral Gables at the age of 91. He received an A.B. from Brooklyn College in mathematics and biology and an M.A. in physiology from Columbia University in 1941. In 1948 he completed his doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota as a National Research Council fellow, specializing in insect physiology and biochemistry. A pioneer in the field of biomedical gerontology, Rockstein was the author of more than ten scientific publications and the author/editor of seven books on the biology of aging.

ALUMNI PROFILE
ANDRE VENDRYES, M.D. ’95

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Andre Vendryes, M.D. ’95, has a family medicine practice in Vero Beach, Florida.

Professional: I’m a board-certified family physician.

Professional Accomplishment: I’m Proud Of: Having taught medical students and residents as an assistant professor in the Miller School’s Department of Family Medicine from 1998 to 2005.

Person Who Influenced Me Most In Medical School: That would be Jesus Christ, because medical school was tough for me. Not only was it intellectually challenging and the hours long, but I was also raising a family and dealing with a serious health threat. God was faithful in sustaining me.

Has Being A Physician Met Your Expectations: I wish that I’d had more time for ping-pong!

Personal Accomplishment: I’m Proud Of: Having established a family with my wife, Erica, and our four children.

Has Being A Physician Met Your Expectations: Absolutely! I can think of no more noble profession. It is incredibly rewarding, as well as very humbling, to be able to address people’s physical, psychological, and even spiritual needs.