

# THE BREEZEWAY

Summer 2023

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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McGovern Medical School



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# Greetings from THE BREEZEWAY

Dear alumni and friends,

As we say farewell and congratulations to our Class of 2023, we also mark the significant milestone of celebrating the 50th anniversary of our first graduates, the Class of 1973.

This spring, we were thrilled to welcome four members of this first class back to McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston for a weekend of reminiscing and fellowship.

Ever since I joined McGovern Medical School as chair of the Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology in 2008, I have always enjoyed attending commencement as a faculty member. This year, I had the honor of serving as executive dean during the ceremony.

I was appointed to the executive dean position, effective Sept. 1, 2022. On behalf of McGovern Medical School, I want to thank Dr. Richard Andrassy, who served as our executive dean *ad interim*.

I am proud of the growth and strength of our medical school. We have a devoted faculty, bright young students and trainees, a fantastic clinical practice, and a robust research enterprise.

As executive dean, my long-term goal is to increase the research profile of McGovern Medical School as we build upon our 50-year history.

I am dedicated to the success of McGovern Medical School, and I look forward to meeting each of you.

## John Hancock

MA, MB, BChir, PhD, ScD

**Executive Dean**

H. Wayne Hightower Distinguished Professor in the Medical Sciences

John S. Dunn Distinguished University Chair in Physiology and Medicine

Executive Director, The Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases

McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston

Senior Vice President of Research Strategy and Innovation, UTHealth Houston

# McGOVERN MEDICAL SCHOOL

## ALUMNI WEEKEND 2023

### Distinguished Alumnus Awards

Austin Black, MS2, connected with alumnus Gary Heaton, MD '73. Heaton was Austin's pediatrician!



Former Distinguished Alumnus Award recipients came back to celebrate current recipients Shelby D. Melton, MD '04, and Lemuel Maxwell Arnold, MD '77. (From left: Donald Nino, MD '83; Arnold; Jane Fitch, MD '88; Vivian Porche, MD '85; Melton, and John Cangelosi, MD '05)

### Culinary CME

Alumni and friends took part in a culinary experience with the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health Nourish program. They learned about food from the garden and cooked the food for everyone to share.







## Legacy Luncheon

Current medical students and their legacy families gathered together to swap stories during our inaugural Legacy Luncheon.



## Reunion Dinner

The Alumni Weekend culminated with dinner at Brennan's of Houston. Alumni and friends enjoyed conversation during our sold-out reception and dinner.





# FORTY YEARS LATER

## ALUMNA STILL THERE FOR THOSE WHO NEED HER

written by  
**John Evans**  
Office of Development

**Even after a long shift, Leslie Cagle, MD '83, always showed up. As a surgeon at Vancouver Clinic in the state of Washington during the 1990s, Cagle experienced what she called the most challenging part of her career as a physician: night call.**

"We would have three days in a row where we may have to go in for a night surgery after working all day," she remembers. "It was hard physically and psychologically—on your relationships and family."

In a career spanning nearly 40 years, Cagle built a reputation of showing up—for her patients, surgical team, and the young doctors and students following in her footsteps.

A graduate of the Doctor of Medicine degree program and surgical residency program at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston, Cagle fondly recalls \$300 annual tuition, her tight-knit group of friends, and the wonder she felt over the intricacies of the human body.

"To this day, I am still flabbergasted by the complexity of our bodies," she says. "Right this minute, your kidneys are doing this very complicated filtration, and you don't even have a clue what's going on."

Clinical rotations at busy trauma centers in the Texas Medical Center and in oncology at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center prepared her for the broad range of cases she would encounter as a surgeon. McGovern Medical School legends like Cheves Smythe, MD—the school's first dean—and Walter Kirkendall, MD, taught enduring lessons about what it means to be a physician.

"I remember Dr. Kirkendall told us that if a patient has diabetes, the treatment is pretty straightforward," Cagle says. "That's not exciting. But what's exciting is getting to know patients, and that never gets old."

Cagle went on to apply her knowledge at Vancouver Clinic by performing the county's first gallbladder removal and fecal transplant and serving on the hospital's quality control panel. All the while, she made sure to take time for her patients and ask about their lives, whether listening to stories about vacations in Greece or learning about life as a professional dog groomer.



**"We would have three days in a row where we may have to go in for a night surgery after working all day," she remembers. "It was hard physically and psychologically—on your relationships and family."**

**Leslie Cagle, MD '83**



She also maintained a passion for supporting the next generation of doctors, taking opportunities to mentor young physicians just as more experienced practitioners helped her during her formative years.

"It's fun to interact with young people," Cagle says. "They have a whole other view on life."

Cagle retired in 2020, but she wasn't done helping others follow her path in medicine. When a friend nominated her to serve as class agent for the 40-year reunion of McGovern Medical School Class of 1983, Cagle challenged the class to raise \$40,000 by the end of July 2023 to support the school's students and faculty.

"Since most of us who graduated 40 years ago are at the height of our careers or retiring, it seemed like a very achievable goal," she says.

Looking back on her career, Cagle chooses not to focus on her many achievements, but instead on her commitment to always being there when needed—for her patients, colleagues, and those on the road to a profession that still fascinates her.

"I may not have always been the best," she says. "But I always showed up."



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# CELEBRATE THE CLASS OF 2023



**As we honor the Class of 2023 at McGovern Medical School, a new cohort of physicians is preparing to embark on the journey of a lifetime. All their years of preparation and hard work have led to this moment.**

Donor support has helped our students reach this milestone—whether by providing scholarships that reduced our students' debt load, support that enhanced our educational environment, or funds that provided opportunities to explore medical research.

Please consider helping our school continue to offer these opportunities to future students by making a gift in honor of the Class of 2023. Your gift to the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund or Student Assistance Fund can provide financial aid to students. With a contribution to our White Coat Fund, you can help purchase coats for future classes to receive at the White Coat ceremony commemorating the start of their medical careers.

We hope you will take a moment to make a gift to celebrate the hard work of these students and champion their futures as exceptional physicians who will care for our families, friends, and neighbors for years to come.



*Scan the QR code to  
support the next class of  
medical students.*

# MELTON, ARNOLD HONORED

## WITH THE DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS AWARD

written by

**Roman Petrowski**

Office of Communications, McGovern Medical School

**McGovern Medical School honored Shelby D. Melton, MD '04, and Lemuel Maxwell Arnold, MD '77, as its 2022 Distinguished Alumnus Award recipients during the Alumni Weekend celebration.**

Melton and Arnold were honored for significant contributions in the areas of medical science and education and for the treatment of disease, as well as a continued interest in McGovern Medical School and its students. The Distinguished Alumnus Award has been presented by the Alumni Association since 1987.



**Shelby D.  
Melton, MD '04**

Melton is chief of the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service at VA North Texas Health Care System in Dallas, the second-largest VA health care system in the nation, and an associate professor in the Department of Pathology at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. Following graduation from McGovern Medical School in 2004, he completed an anatomic and clinical pathology residency at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, before returning to UT Southwestern for fellowships in molecular genetic pathology and gastrointestinal pathology in 2009 and 2010, respectively.

Melton recalled how thankful Jane Fitch, MD '88, and Grant Fowler, MD '84, were to be honored when he presented the award in 2016 while serving as the president of the McGovern Medical School Alumni Association Board of Trustees.

"What can I say? I'm grateful, appreciative, proud," Melton said. "This is certainly a special occasion and a great reason to come back to Houston and celebrate. As I scroll through the gallery of past recipients, I'm excited that this award will hopefully make a mark of service to my alma mater and leave a legacy of inspiration for other alumni."

Throughout his career, Melton has been named a Top Provider in Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service three times (2018, 2019, and 2022) by VA North Texas Health Care System, and earned Leadership in Emerging Academic Department Program honors by the Office of Faculty Diversity and Development at UT Southwestern in 2014, and served on the Board of Directors of the Association for Molecular Pathology (2020-22). However, Melton said that the Distinguished Alumnus Award at McGovern Medical School is easily in the top five moments of his career.

"Serendipity can land you in the limelight once or maybe twice," Melton said. "I've lectured in Beirut to an international audience. I worked on a study that was published in the New England Journal of Medicine, another great opportunity. But those are just moments in time, snapshots, or milestones. But for this award—voted on by other physicians not involved in my specialty, and based on a career's worth of work—it's extra special."



**Lemuel Maxwell  
Arnold, MD '77**

Arnold is a pediatrician at the Primary Healthcare Center of Dade in Trenton, Georgia, where he specializes in general pediatrics/adolescent medicine. Arnold graduated from McGovern Medical School in 1977 before completing a residency in pediatrics at affiliated hospitals within UTHouston in 1980.

"[Being named a Distinguished Alumnus] is an opportunity to model mentorship and show what one can do if you make the most of the opportunities given," Arnold said. "One of the people that I have met on my journey through life is former President Jimmy Carter. He struggled through a difficult presidency and made the most of his time as an ex-President."



Arnold has been a member of several medical associations and societies, including the Medical Association of Atlanta, where he served as a member of the board of directors from 1997-2003 and the Medical Association of Georgia, where he was a delegate to the House of Delegates from 1998-2003. He also served on the board of directors and as vice president of Membership and Development for the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association from 2008-09.

The Distinguished Alumnus Award for Arnold adds to an impressive resume of accomplishments he has achieved, including becoming president of the medical staff of Scottish Rite Children's Medical Center, associate medical director for business affairs at The Southeast Permanente Medical Group, and member of the Kaiser Permanente National Diversity Council. He received the R.J. Erickson Diversity Achievement Award from Kaiser Permanente in 2005.

"I see the award as an acknowledgment of a lot of hard work during my career," he said.

Arnold was the Physician Champion/Editor for the *Provider Handbook for Culturally Competent Care: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Population* for the Kaiser Permanente National Diversity Council and has created an endowment to support diversity and inclusion in the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs at McGovern Medical School.

"I think one of the best experiences as a gay medical student was having representation in educational material presented in classes," Arnold said. "When I saw that Emil Steinberger, MD, was having a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender panel present to my class, it made me feel much more comfortable being here."



# ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT OPERATIONS

## EXPANDS TO SELECT RESIDENCY PROGRAMS



**This year, the Office of University Alumni Engagement began engaging McGovern Medical School resident alumni through events, panels, and additional programming.**

The office partnered with the Department of Anesthesiology, Critical Care, and Pain Management to host two receptions in the fall of 2022. The first was in Round Rock, Texas, at the Texas Society of Anesthesiologists Annual Meeting. The second was a reception in New Orleans that coincided with the American Society of Anesthesiologists Annual Meeting. Both receptions had great attendance and laid a solid foundation for future engagement with the department.

After having a conversation with a current resident in the Department of Pediatrics, an alumni panel was formed to speak to current residents about going from residency into private practice. The panelists, Shannon Crane, MD, Resident '15; Christina Marchesano, MD '09, Resident '13; and D. Maneesh Kumar, DO, PhD, Resident '10, covered topics such as contract negotiation, salary and benefits, finding the right culture fit, and the realities of their day-to-day life. UTHealth Houston also hosted a reception for alumni and friends who attended the Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting in Washington, D.C.



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# HALF CENTURY SOCIETY

written by

**Roman Petrowski**

Office of Communications, McGovern Medical School

The world, the Texas Medical Center, and McGovern Medical School at UTHouston looked completely different in 1973. Richard Nixon was president, a gallon of gasoline cost on average 39 cents, “The Godfather” won the Academy Award for Best Picture, and the inaugural class of McGovern Medical School walked the stage for commencement.

**“I thought that I was taught very well. When I started as a resident, there was one resident and then other fellows from the Baylor College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics in the evenings. They were really wonderful and personal experiences getting to work with the faculty.”**

Gary Heaton, MD '73

When the Class of 1973 began their medical education, the school was originally named The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, and the degree program lasted just three years instead of four.

Additionally, the medical school building we know today was merely a project for the future. In fact, there was no building at all for the medical students at the start of their curriculum.

With no home of their own, the students were distributed across other medical schools in The University of Texas System, including schools in Galveston, Dallas, and San Antonio, where they studied for two years before returning to the newly completed John H. Freeman Building in Houston in 1972.

In December 1973, 22 medical students—19 from the original inaugural class and three transfers—became the first graduates of what is now McGovern Medical School. Fifty years later, four members of that inaugural class, who paved the road for each of the 8,500 alumni who have since graduated from the medical school, returned to campus as part of the annual Alumni Weekend on March 23-25.

The members from the 1973 class, which included Gary Heaton, MD; Asa Lockhart, MD; Jon Schreiber, MD; and Warren Redmond, MD, joined fellow McGovern Medical School alumni for a weekend of festivities, highlighted

by the Half Century Society Luncheon, honoring the graduates from 50 years ago.

At the luncheon, each of the returning members shared stories and memories from five decades ago.

They recalled not only how small their class had been compared to the 240 McGovern Medical School students who would graduate in the Class of 2023, but also how small the faculty had been as well. Despite the limited number of faculty, however, Heaton remembers they worked together and built wonderful experiences in their training.





"I thought that I was taught very well," Heaton said. "When I started as a resident, there was one resident and then other fellows from the Baylor College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics in the evenings. They were really wonderful and personal experiences getting to work with the faculty."

Lockhart shared Heaton's sentiments and took it a step further in remembering the close relationships with department chairs that the group was able to develop. He recalled a comical story of taking his internal medicine final, in which he was being extremely thorough.

"I spent my first two years at UT Southwestern, which had a reputation at the time for being pretty competitive. It was not uncommon for somebody to give you wrong information so they could do a little bit better than you," he said. "The final was an essay, and Dr. (Walter) Kirkendall was chair of the department. There were six or eight questions, and a lot of other folks had finished. And it was pass-fail, and he looked over and said, 'I think you pretty well got it, and if you don't leave now, it is pass-fail, and I am going to fail you. I'm ready to go home.'"

Along with the great relationships he had, he also remembered some of the amazing opportunities that were afforded to him through his time in medical school, including the first international rotation

with the university, where he was able to escape the Yom Kippur War by just a few days.

For Redmond, he feels that 50 years later, his memories of school, residency, and clinical rotations are all a blur, but what he got the most out of his time at McGovern Medical School was what he learned about himself.

Some of the valuable lessons he learned were that you cannot take yourself or medicine too seriously—it is better to be rich and healthy than to be poor and sick. He also joked that they learned that if you can remain calm and collected while all those around you are losing their heads, possibly you don't understand the situation, and that "The patient will tell you that they know you think you understand what you thought they said, but they're not sure you realize what you heard is not what they meant."

One of the most prominent figures that each of the four members mentioned having an impact on their lives and their careers was James "Red" Duke Jr., MD. Like the inaugural graduating class, Duke officially joined the medical school in 1972 and in his tenure introduced Memorial Hermann's Life Flight program, brought a Level 1 trauma unit to Houston, and hosted a series of nationally syndicated television spots called "Texas Health Reports" which was viewed by millions of people.



Yet, though he seemed larger than life to some, students at McGovern Medical School at the time were able to work right alongside him. Of course, Schreiber remembers some of his physical attributes like his "gigantic mustache" and his hat, but he also remembers getting to do surgery with Duke as well.

"We did a gallbladder one night at about midnight, and I got to hold the liver up for five hours," Schreiber said. "You'd start to fall asleep in the middle of it, and he'd jolt you awake with his elbow. There were some pretty well-known professors here."

Since 1973, a lot has changed. Graduating classes are bigger, the curriculum is a year longer, and the faculty has increased tenfold. However, despite all the changes at McGovern Medical School, Schreiber said that he notices one constant:

**"Though the years have changed, one thing remains the same: the commitment to excellent leaders in education."**





# STUDENT SNAPSHOTS

## MS4 Pre-Match Day Celebration

Students gathered at McGovern Medical School for a toast prior to Match Day.



## Dinners with a Doc

This popular program is a chance for students and alumni to connect over dinner throughout the year. To make your Dinner with a Doc reservation, email [ms.alumni@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:ms.alumni@uth.tmc.edu).

## Behind the Scenes

Rohan Patil, MS1 and Alumni Student Network representative, with his peers and Han Zhang, MD, in the anatomy lab.







## Q&A WITH EXECUTIVE DEAN **HANCOCK**

**Dr. John Hancock, the new executive dean and H. Wayne Hightower Distinguished Professor in the Medical Sciences, responds to questions about the past and future.**

**You joined McGovern Medical School in 2008 as chair of the Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology. Did you always have ambitions to become dean?**

I've thought about it philosophically at various times over the last decade, along the lines of what I would have done if presented with the same challenge, when key decisions were made. I only really thought about it seriously when it was suggested that I should apply.

**You are McGovern Medical School's first executive dean. How is that different from dean?**

I'm not sure it's that different—it just more accurately reflects the extensive roles and responsibilities of our current Dean's Office, which due to the scope and size of McGovern Medical School, requires a team to fully execute. I will be working alongside LaTanya Love, MD, our dean of education, and Richard Andrassy, MD, senior vice president for clinical and faculty affairs at the university and co-chair of the Clinical Leadership Council, to ensure the full support of all mission areas.

**What are your short-term and long-term goals for McGovern Medical School?**

One of my primary goals is to expand basic, clinical, and translational research across the institution, and to provide fellows and students with increased research opportunities. By listening to, and consulting with, chairs about their plans for research, together we can formulate strategies to deliver on those aspirations. This goal matches one of my charges as executive dean—to increase the research profile of McGovern Medical School and more broadly across UTHealth Houston. My vision is to empower and support faculty to be as productive and successful as possible, and reward their success.



**Richard J. Andrassy, MD**

Jack H. Mayfield, MD, Distinguished University Chair in Surgery  
Denton A. Cooley, MD, Chair in Surgery  
McGovern Medical School

Senior Vice President, Clinical Affairs and Strategy  
Co-chair, Clinical Leadership Council  
UTHealth Houston



**Latanya J. Love, MD**

Dean of Education  
McGovern Medical School

Executive Vice President,  
Student Affairs and Diversity  
UTHealth Houston





## CONVERSATIONS

# FROM THE **LEATHER LOUNGE**

### An interview with

**Frank Skobel, MD '13, Resident '16**

#### **RESIDENCY**

Emergency Medicine, McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston

#### **CURRENT JOB TITLE**

Emergency physician working in Michigan, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Kansas

What is your fondest memory of your time at McGovern Medical School?

Doris' cheerful smile at the French Corner in the mornings. Always made my day.

Who is your mentor?

My childhood neighbor Bobby Hoard. He was one of the first doctors trained in emergency medicine. He retired as he started to lose his vision and ironically took up painting. I spent summers as a kid in his studio learning to paint and hearing his stories from back in the day. They inspired me to become a doctor and work in emergency medicine.

What's a day on the job like?

I'm primarily in rural and critical access hospitals. It gives me a chance to participate in a lot of different aspects of medicine since resources are so limited. I also get to connect with patients in a way that I never got to in urban emergency departments.

What skill is most vital to your job?

Teamwork and empathy.

What do you enjoy doing on your day off?

Designing costumes, skiing, adding personality to the Victorian home I share with my husband.

Who would you most like to meet (alive or deceased) and why?

James Turrell. I used to walk through his work in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and sit inside his skyscape on Rice University's campus to meditate. I've been really into lighting design since then and would love to talk to him about how we experience light.

Where is your favorite vacation spot?

Black Rock City.

Where is your favorite lunch spot?

When I was in Houston, I would always grab a banh mi sandwich and iced coffee from Les Givral on my way to work. Best in town.



# VOLUNTEER

Our alumni are a great asset to the McGovern Medical School community. We have numerous opportunities that will allow you to share your knowledge, create meaningful relationships, and grow your network. Find the right opportunity for you at [med.uth.edu/alumni](http://med.uth.edu/alumni).

# SEND IN YOUR CLASS NOTES!



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Senior Director  
Annual Giving and  
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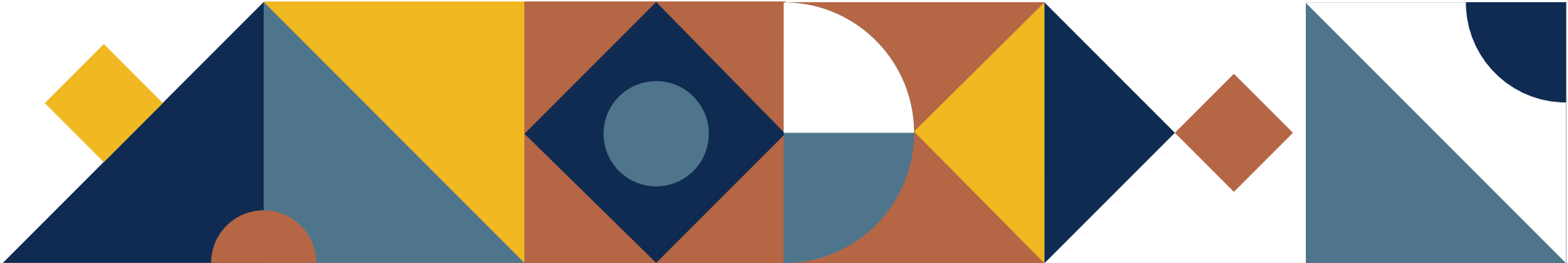
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