11-9-2011

Occupational Therapy Gift of Fred Sammons and Barbara Rider

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• Good afternoon. I'm glad you are all here. As you know, this is a terrific location for announcing good news. And good news is exactly what I have to tell you this afternoon.

• As Dean Washington just shared, Western Michigan University's Occupational Therapy program is one of amazing quality and one that has a long and rich tradition for excellence. Professionals across the nation know and recognize the caliber of this program and respect and admire the quality of training and research that is accomplished here.

• Today's announcement is a reflection of that confidence and the esteem in which this program and this University is held by the leading professionals in the Occupational Therapy discipline. Two highly regarded figures in the field have decided to demonstrate their regard by making a significant investment in this program and its future.

• Our wonderful donors, Fredric (Fred) W. Sammons and Dr. Barbara A. Rider, have made a $2 million gift to the Department of Occupational Therapy. Their gift is the largest ever made to an occupational therapy program in the history of American higher education.

• Our donors--and I'll tell you more about them and introduce them to you in a moment--have been thoughtful and clear in their reasons for the gift. They intend
this to be an investment in both this program and their discipline's future. Their gift will provide:

- An Endowed Chair—the Frederic W. Sammons Endowed Chair in Occupational Therapy—in the College of Health and Human Services

- $250,000 for innovative projects in the Occupational Therapy Department, including an online journal to benefit the entire discipline.

- $250,000 for the Barbara A. Rider Endowed Distinguished Professorship in Occupational Therapy.

That's the commitment they've made. That's the investment we're celebrating today. Let me tell you about Fred Sammons and Barbara Rider and the contributions they have made to their discipline already.

Fred Sammons is the founder of Sammons Preston Inc., the largest, worldwide distributor of rehabilitation equipment and supplies. The company he founded when he was a young therapist member working with amputees at a Northwestern University clinic, eventually grew into a multimillion dollar business and is now a part of Patterson Medical Inc. Fred earned his OT degree at Virginia Commonwealth University on the GI Bill, and holds an honorary doctoral degree in public service from WMU. His first job was at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, where he became director in 1957. It was in 1960 at Northwestern that he first began to design and build devices to assist individuals with disabilities in their everyday activities.

Fred is a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association and a recipient of AOTA’s highest honor, the Award of Merit. He is one of only six honorary life members of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation and an active member in AMBUCS and other non-profit organizations.
• Dr. Barbara Rider is professor emerita and past chair of WMU's Department of Occupational Therapy. She received her doctorate in educational administration from the University of Michigan, and prior to joining the WMU community in 1976 she was an associate professor of occupational therapy at the University of Kansas. Earlier in her career she served as director of occupational therapy at the Veterans Administration Hospital and Kapper Foundation for Crippled Children in Topeka, Kan.

• Barbara is well-known and respected as a researcher, teacher and consultant, and she is widely recognized for her pioneering research in developmental reflexes. In 2003, Rider received the Lindy Boggs Award, from the American Occupational Therapy Association. That award recognizes a lifetime of achievement in effecting political change in matters important to the profession of occupational therapy. In her retirement, Rider serves as chair of the board of the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services.

• This is a wonderful tribute to our program from two people who know this discipline better than anyone. They have chosen to invest in the future of their profession by supporting a program that they know to be among the best in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Fred Sammons and Dr. Barbara Rider. Please join me in showing our appreciation and welcoming them to the podium.

(Fred Sammons and Barbara Rider come up to the podium)