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2nd Annual Imagine Gala WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine

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• Good evening. Thank you all for being here to keep "Imagining" all the good that we can continue to make happen. I know you have dubbed Linda and me as "guests of honor" for this evening's event. We truly are in the position of feeling both honored and humbled to be part of this celebration that brings us all together for a cause that represents the very best qualities of this community.

• Opportunity, education, innovation, the life sciences and community partnerships are part of the Kalamazoo DNA. This extraordinary school of medicine is a tangible representation of all of those qualities. And tonight's fundraising cause is an example of the commitment all of you have made to doing the right thing--for our young people, for our community and for the future.

• We--Linda and I--could not be more proud to be part of this initiative, and we will always feel a special kinship with all of you and with the faculty, staff and students who are part of WMed. At the end of the day, that's what this is all about--the people in our community, the students we serve and the future we're building.

• I must point out that in April, when the Dunn Farewell Bus Tour stopped here at WMed, I was presented with an honor--a designation really--that I intend to use as liberally as possible. I was designated "professor emeritus of medicine at the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine." You'll notice I signed my name that way in this evening's program.
While one has to wonder about the wisdom of this temple of medical knowledge making such a move, I was intrigued last week to hear comedian Will Farrell speculate about how he planned to use the honorary "doctorate" he had just received from the University of Southern California. He spoke of performing "minimally invasive surgery" anytime and anywhere--even if people don't want it. "The next time I’m flying and they ask if there’s a doctor on board," he said "I can now confidently leap to my feet and scream, ‘I’m a doctor, what can I do? Yes, no problem, I can absolutely deliver that baby."

Well that got me thinking. I'm a "Dr." and I now have a serious medical credential. So, watch out. I will treasure the possibilities that medical credential opens up for as long as I live.

• People keep reminding me that it was during my first year in Kalamazoo that I broached the idea of a medical school. I finally looked through some of my old formal remarks a few days ago to find those first few words. They really focused on the marvelous infrastructure already in place here--world class hospitals, a legacy of teaching and a communitywide commitment to life science innovation.

I merely observed that with all the resources and tradition Kalamazoo already had in place, a medical school might not be a bad idea. Here's what I said in January of 2008.

"I don't underestimate the challenges and costs of going down this road. But we cannot underestimate our ability and capacity to make this a reality. Nor can we underestimate the benefit this community would realize from such an initiative."
That's it. On reflection, I have to say it was perhaps me who underestimated that ability and capacity. What we have built together is much more than I had "Imagined." But I'm so glad we started down that road.

• I saw the Imagine GALA sendoff news story two months ago and it mentioned the Dunn's would be treated to an "honorary sendoff." I couldn't imagine what could top the outpouring of good wishes we've enjoyed throughout this year. Now, I know. We will long remember this evening and your support as well as the friendships we've enjoyed with you over the years.

• We could not have been welcomed into a finer, more generous and forward-thinking community. Thank you for the kindnesses you've shown us and thank you for building something, the very thought of which, will bring a smile to our faces and a great feeling of pride to our hearts for many, many years to come.

Thank you.