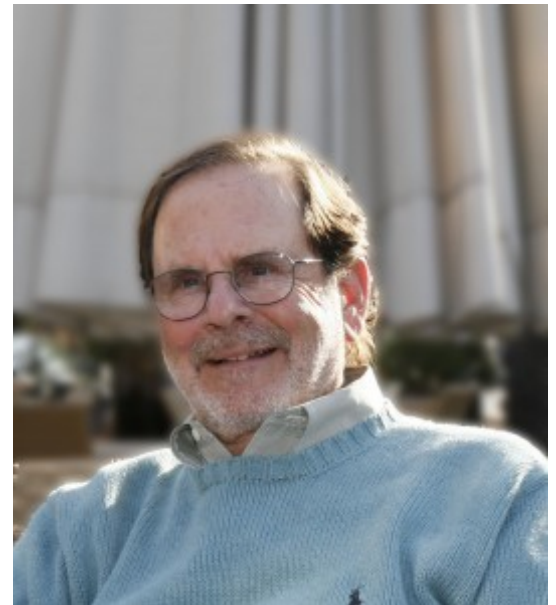




## Custodians of a Legacy

On the surface, Richard Gambescia, M.D., HU '71 and Ruth Rizzo Savarese Gambescia, M.D., HU '77 appear to be a unique Hahnemann couple in that each has established a scholarship to benefit incoming medical students to Drexel University College of Medicine. Dr. Gambescia honors his father and uncle, fellow Hahnemann alumni. Dr. Rizzo honors her late first husband, Ronald Savarese, M.D., HU '68. One couple, funding two different scholarships. This is extraordinary.

Dig deeper, however, and it soon becomes clear that their story is not so different from other alumni who have passed through Hahnemann's medical school and hospital. Gambescia and Rizzo are motivated by a deep appreciation for their own peerless education as well as the hospital's renown for being a supportive, collegial work environment. Their scholarships allow them to safeguard this tradition for future generations, making them powerful custodians of a rich and important legacy.



Dr. Gambescia reveals that when he entered medical school, there was no other choice for him but Hahnemann. "There was no place else that I really wanted to go," he says, "because it's a legacy." His father, Pasquale Gambescia, graduated in the late '30s with a degree in homeopathic medicine, and his uncle, Joseph Gambescia, graduated in the early '40s. Richard stayed at Hahnemann for his residency and continued to be involved in the life and leadership of the hospital. In 2006 he became president of the medical staff.

"The Gambescia Family Endowed Scholarship: Pasquale J. C. '37, Joseph M. '44, and Richard A. '71" was created to honor this familial legacy. Gambescia says of his father and uncle, "I just want them to be remembered because I couldn't have done what I did without them." Yet their legacy – and that of Gambescia as well – is completely intertwined with that of Hahnemann University. "I couldn't have done what I did without Hahnemann," he explains. "When a person sees Pat Gambescia, Joe Gambescia, and Richard Gambescia, and says, 'Who are these people?' These are people that were Hahnemann, and they're getting on the Drexel team now."

Dr. Ruth Rizzo Savarese Gambescia was the first woman to complete her surgical training at Hahnemann. Her late first husband, Dr. Ronald Savarese, was also a Hahnemann graduate, class of '68. Around the time Drexel University was assuming leadership of MCP Hahnemann, Rizzo, who by then had married Richard Gambescia, began to think about "a way to give back." Richard suggested a scholarship to the medical school. "It's something I can do to give back to Hahnemann, which I understand is Drexel now," says Rizzo. The scholarship is also a personally important way for her to "honor [my] late first husband."

Both physicians are honest about the concerns they had when Drexel University assumed



leadership of MCP Hahnemann in 2002. Like many Hahnemann alumni, they questioned what the future held for their beloved medical school, particularly after its turbulent management experiences in the '90s. While these initial reservations have abated – and both are quick to credit Drexel's stabilizing and energizing leadership – they believe their scholarships are a way to keep Hahnemann's academic legacy alive.

Rizzo explains, "I got a tremendous medical education [at Hahnemann], and I don't want to see that leave." She observes that many medical schools prioritize "high powered" research – and while this can be a boon to the institution's publicity – it is often at the cost of its students' education. "Drexel University College of

Medicine...still produces *good clinical physicians*. I want to see that continue. If my setting up this scholarship to honor my late first husband can help do that, then that's what I want to do.... I think we need more clinical physicians."

Creating and educating good clinical physicians also forged the bonds of community in the hospital, another of Hahnemann's legacies. Gambescia states, "The institution was very good to me. It gave me my education. I was able to practice there for years. Many people have a story similar to mine in the sense that they start there and they stay at Hahnemann. It's a place where people learn to love the hospital because of the camaraderie.... The residents were very tightly knit.... If Dr. Oaks or Dr. Likoff wanted you to stay as a resident, it was a tremendous honor." He is heartened by the fact that Drexel University College of Medicine students still walk through the doors of *Hahnemann University Hospital*. "The legacy lives on at the hospital," he says.

Despite the change in institutional leadership, both physicians feel a strong connection to the medical school's academic mission and its clinical practice. Their scholarships make them custodians of this esteemed legacy, ensuring that future generations will experience a similar education. Rizzo concludes, "I think the alums have to be active in supporting that [vision], in supporting the institution.... It's still the medical school that we knew and really loved."