

MESSAGE FROM THE GRAYSON-JOCKEY CLUB RESEARCH FOUNDATION

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT AWARDS ADD DEPTH TO EXPERTISE



Grayson-Jockey Club  
Research Foundation

BY EDWARD L. BOWEN

**D**r. Hiram Polk has been a board member of Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation since 1997. In addition to his years as a breeder and owner of Thoroughbreds, he has extensive credentials distinguishing him in the fields of medical practice, management, and education. There are three veterinarians on the Grayson board, Dr. Larry Bramlage, Dr. Gary Lavin, and Dr. Rick Arthur, but Polk is the only doctor in human medicine. Therefore, he was in position to make a suggestion that was later adopted and quickly began benefiting the world of equine research both in terms of careers of individuals and enhancing the health and soundness of horses.

From his experience in his own career, Polk recognized that the foundation, by creating a career development award, could boost young scientists at a stage when they were facing career decisions. Encouraging them to choose/maintain a career path in equine research would have the twofold benefit of helping young careers and creating successors for today's depth of expertise in the field.

Thus was born the Storm Cat Career Development Award, which in due course was joined by the Elaine and Bertram Klein Development Award.

When the career development award plan was approved by the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation board of directors, Mrs. Lucy Young Hamilton stepped forward to underwrite the award personally. Hamilton is the daughter of distinguished horseman W.T. Young, who also had been a director of Grayson. She chose to name the award in honor of her father's homebred Storm Cat, who had been a major winner and became a pivotal stallion at the family's Overbrook Farm. Young has funded a Storm Cat Award each year since the launch of the program.

In 2015 the family of the distinguished horsewoman Elaine Klein of Louisville came forward to initiate a similar career

development award. The Klein Award was renamed the Elaine and Bertram Klein Development Award after the subsequent death of Bertram Klein.

To date Grayson has awarded 21 of these \$15,000 awards for a total of \$315,000 since 2006. Of those recipients, 19 have had time to finish their Ph.D., and 16 (84%) of those have chosen academic/clinical research for their career paths. The awards have become recognized in the research community, and for 2019 the foundation received nine applicants from seven institutions.

Integral to the selection process of projects to be funded by Grayson is an elaborate evaluation system involving the Research Advisory Committee. This committee is made up of 32 researchers and veterinarians representing many specialties and hailing from various regions of North America. Selection of the career development award winners incorporates some of the RAC members who are asked by the foundation's veterinary consultant, Dr. Johnny Mac Smith, to evaluate the proposals, which are received by Grayson by Nov. 1 annually.

The five RAC members asked to help reflect the areas of specialties represented by the year's applications. In following the criteria described above by Dr. Bramlage, Dr. Smith and his cohorts

place emphasis on how effectively an applicant has designed and planned the year for which he/she is requesting the \$15,000 income supplement. Also, it is important that the principal investigator working with the young candidate verifies the program has been allotted sufficient funding by the home institution.

As is the case with all research funded by Grayson, the committee recommends the best candidates from the career development applicants, and the full board makes the final decision.

One measure of the success of the career development programs is that six recipients already have moved ahead in their careers sufficiently to have a full-fledged project funded from Grayson's principal budget for research. Each of the six has been funded either as a principal investigator (PI) or co-PI of a project.

Illustrative of scholastic experience that leads some candidates toward the specific career of equine research is the following description by former career development award winner Stephanie Bond:

"I found the deductive reasoning and problem solving required to practice medicine on animals intellectually rewarding. I then organized placement at an equine hospital which solidified my decision to become an equine veterinarian.

"Half-way through my veterinary degree, I undertook a research year. It was during this time I realized that, while I enjoy clinical work, research enables me to make a positive impact on far more horses than I could ever treat in clinics."

"The career development awards are a vital key enabling researchers to

bridge the difficult gap between finishing their Ph.D. and starting their own research laboratory,” noted Bramlage. “Bridging that gap makes it possible to stay in the research field for some young researchers and eventually produces the vital research that we need for the horse. This award develops the researcher, not the scientific papers.”

#### **ON DR. HIRAM C. POLK JR.**

Hiram C. Polk Jr., a native of Jackson, Miss., is an alumnus of Millsaps College and the Harvard Medical School. Polk trained in surgery at Washington University in St. Louis and was a fellow at the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine in London before receiving an academic appointment at the University of Miami. He became a full profes-

sor and director of pediatric surgery at Jackson Memorial Hospital (Miami). In 1971, at the age of 35, he was recruited to the University of Louisville as chairman of surgery. When he stepped down as chairman, the University of Louisville department of surgery was rededicated as the Hiram C. Polk Department of Surgery and an endowed chair was established in his name. Advances when he was chairman include the development and first implantation of the AbioCore artificial heart and the organization of one of the world’s first hand transplant programs. Polk trained more than 230 surgical residents. All hold board certification in general surgery, and some of the surgical residents have become academic surgery chairmen at medical schools.

talk about common issues. We take that really seriously. Additionally, so many internships and job opportunities come out of our mentor lunch. Our students each become a name, a face, and a person, not just a résumé.”

Last year the RTIP refocused on the bloodstock side of things by introducing its Bloodstock Project, which resulted in students in the program helping to select two pregnant mares out of the Keeneland November mixed sale.

“We got a wonderful donation, and the intent for that money was to use it to go through the entire process the first time and then hopefully continue it for those students who want to be involved on the bloodstock side,” said Davis. “Both mares were in foal and have foaled out. It’s been really fun because it’s letting students see the real world of the bloodstock side and what the costs really are. We’ve really