

## THE SCIENCE OF HUMANITY

### SELFLESS GIFT LEAVES LASTING LEGACY

by Karen Burbach



Students entering the College of Medicine and School of Allied Health Professions never truly know their first teacher.

Though they spend hours together each day, they never hear their voice, learn their name or share favorite pastimes.

And, yet, these quiet souls have an invaluable and lasting impact on each student as they begin their professional journey.

Nearly 200 people annually donate their bodies to the Nebraska Anatomical Board and about half of those bodies go to UNMC to be used in the medical center's Gross Anatomy Lab or the Advanced Anatomy Laboratory for Research, Education and Clinical Skills.

The appreciation for, and understanding of, anatomy can only be experienced fully when students have contact with cadavers, said Robert Binhammer, Ph.D., who has taught anatomy for more than 50 years, including 30 at UNMC.

"Books can teach you a whole lot but they're inadequate," Dr. Binhammer said. "No textbook or patient simulator can account for the variety these students will encounter in reality – it's vital that the students understand that."


It's also important that donor families understand the gratitude UNMC students have toward their loved ones – mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters and grandparents – who donate their bodies to advance medical science.

*"Mom always said when she died she wouldn't need her body, so why not do some good."*

*"He believed research was important and he wanted to be a part of that."*

*"(A lifelong teacher) she wanted to keep on teaching."*

First-year physician assistant, physical therapy and medical students host a ceremony each spring to honor those who have donated their bodies for scientific research and training.

And, while students know only their teacher's age, gender and what pathology took their life, they know their selfless gift will touch countless lives. 

**For more information on anatomical donation, contact the Nebraska Anatomical Board at 402-559-6249.**



Watch a ceremony that recognizes these remarkable teachers.  
[www.unmc.edu/discover](http://www.unmc.edu/discover)