

# Alum sees giving a lifetime reward

by Lisa Spellman

Carol Swarts, M.D., understands and lives by the concept that life comes full circle.

"The University of Nebraska gave me the chance to do what I've always wanted to do, be a doctor," said the 1959 graduate of the UNMC College of Medicine.

"Nebraska let me in at a time when girls were discouraged from becoming doctors and because of that I have gotten to spend my life doing what I love," said Dr. Swarts, who was one of three women in her graduating class.

As a result, the radiation oncologist continues to support her alma mater.

Her most recent show of support came in the form of a \$500,000 commitment that will fund research in the Department of Pharmacology and Experimental Neuroscience. The laboratory, which now bears her name, will support related research endeavors that stretch from San Juan, Puerto Rico to the Arctic Circle.

She also has given money to support the low vision clinic, which is now under construction, and the student-run Sharing Clinic, at which she also has given much of her time. At least once a month for the past three years, Dr. Swarts has volunteered to mentor students at the

"Two old men on a long journey crossed a deep chasm on an old rickety bridge. Once safely across, one man stopped and began rebuilding the bridge. The other man, wanting to continue because it was growing dark, asked his companion for an explanation. The old man replied, "I am old and have already made many safe passages across the bridge, but the next person will be younger and inexperienced. I am rebuilding the bridge for him."

Condensed from "The Bridge Builder" by Will Allen Dromgoole



Dr. Carol Swarts working in the lab with Dr. Howard Gendelman.

clinic which provides care for underserved people.

Dr. Swarts, who was honored earlier this year as the College of Medicine Volunteer Faculty of the Year for mentoring radiation oncology students, said she believes it is a privilege and a responsibility to give back to society.

From humble beginnings in the Sandhills of western Nebraska, Dr. Swarts was born to tenant farmers who

# Carol Swarts, M.D.

## Emerging Neuroscience Research Laboratory

were constantly on the move. Yet, they instilled in their children a desire to do well in school and a sense of responsibility to their community.

“Our parents believed that a good education would improve our lives,” Dr. Swarts said.

Active in their church, her parents lived the golden rule and helped their family and neighbors in altruistic ways.

That generosity was so ingrained that after Alzheimer’s disease claimed her father, several family members and her own husband, she searched for a cure.

Her search ended eight years ago when she met Howard Gendelman, M.D., chairman of pharmacology and experimental neuroscience at UNMC.

“Dr. Gendelman is pioneering the next frontier in medicine to find the cause, and hopefully a cure, for Alzheimer’s disease and other neurological disorders,” Dr. Swarts said.

“The money that Carol has given us establishes the Laboratory of Emerging Neuroscience Research and funds some of the most exciting yet high risk projects that, despite the potential of high payoffs, could not be supported by any other means,” Dr. Gendelman said.

“The unique thing about Howie and other scientists in his lab is that they work as a team,” Dr. Swarts said.

“Bright scientific minds and rich cultural backgrounds have merged with advanced technologies to create a fantastic research environment.

“We all feel the best is yet to come.”

### New lab to kick-start promising research

The Laboratory of Emerging Neuroscience Research will conduct preliminary studies to provide data for projects that will be submitted for federal funding. Projects range from brain regeneration to novel treatments and diagnostics for different neurodegenerative disorders.

One such study underway is in collaboration with Kelly Drew, Ph.D., from the University of Alaska, whose work focuses on hibernating mammals.

“It has been observed that hibernating mammals have neuroprotective capabilities during periods of extreme metabolic depression,” said Pawel Ciborowski, Ph.D., director of the proteomics program at UNMC.

Another is to further the development of anti-retroviral drug delivery platforms for those who would benefit most. Yet another is to develop new ways to clear plaques in Alzheimer’s disease and affect immune responses that damage the brain as a consequence of injury, infection and degeneration. ∞∞