

# A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

by Harold M. Maurer, M.D.

As I look at the many exciting things happening at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, I can't help but think: "It's not the buildings that make an institution great, it's the people who make it great."

That statement rings true at



Harold M. Maurer, M.D.,  
Chancellor

UNMC. Your Medical Center is hard at work to improve the lives of all Nebraskans. Medical Center faculty and staff educate future health-care

professionals for the state, conduct innovative research, provide quality patient care and reach out to those who need help.

It's a daunting task – but one I'm confident we will continue to achieve.

This edition of *UNMC Discover* is full of accounts of how Medical Center faculty and staff are helping us achieve our mission.

One way we serve the state is by turning ideas into inventions. UNMC researchers and scientists are brilliant people. They have ideas that, when translated into products, can improve people's lives and become a source of revenue.

UNMC's UneMed Corp. provides our faculty and staff with a means for turning those ideas into reality. We help researchers patent their ideas

and market them. The UneMed Corp. helps keep technology at home in Nebraska.

Turn to the cover story of this edition and learn how Dr. Tom McDonald helps UNMC researchers work through the challenges of technology transfer. As they have learned, the outcome can be extraordinary.

Learn also in this edition about how UNMC is partnering with the Urban League to fight diabetes in underserved areas.

Medical Center faculty share their expertise during our Mini-Medical School sessions twice each year. No, you don't have to study and there are no tests. Simply attend Mini-Medical School and learn about the latest in health-care topics. You'll learn in this magazine about the next session. It's not too late to sign up.

Finally, you'll read about UNMC's perfusion program. It's one of the best in the country and it's being led by a devoted educator.

UNMC continues to push forward in reaching its goal to be a world-class academic health sciences center. Many exciting things are occurring on campus.

Recently, we received initial approval from the University of Nebraska Board of Regents to build new research space on campus. We have a desperate shortage of quality research space at UNMC, and this center will help alleviate that problem.

I previously mentioned that buildings do not make an institution great. That's true. But facilities should enhance work not inhibit it.

Researchers will use this space – which will include laboratories and

classrooms – to focus on two areas: stem cells and disease of the brain and spinal cord:

- Stem cells – life's most primitive cells and perhaps a mechanism for organ growth – could one day make organ transplantation obsolete. Imagine regenerating organs such as a liver or a pancreas from a single stem cell.

- UNMC researchers have discovered a similarity between how AIDS and Alzheimer's disease cause dementia. This discovery sparked a unique collaboration of researchers at UNMC. An Omaha schoolteacher can attest to the significance of this discovery. Dementia from AIDS held her hostage. She was comatose. UNMC researchers, through a combination of drugs, reversed the disease's progression. Today, this schoolteacher is back in the classroom.

Experts estimate that nearly 80,000 Nebraskans will be afflicted by Alzheimer's disease by the year 2010. What if this same miracle that restored the Omaha schoolteacher's quality of life could be translated to those suffering from Alzheimer's? Our researchers hope to find out.

As I continue to visit Nebraska communities to talk about the Medical Center's mission, I will continue to carry the message of how the University of Nebraska Medical Center is working to improve people's lives. It's a message I love to carry because it's one that offers hope and comfort to the people we serve. *d*