

# from heartbreaking loss, opportunities for others

From right: Kristen Ettensohn, with fellow Class of 2010 classmates Lydia Helliwell, Jhilm Biswas and Emily Marsters during a 2007 medical mission trip to Peru.



## *Parents establish an endowed scholarship at UMass Medical School in memory of their daughter to help students “pick up where she left off”*

**K**risten M. Ettensohn, UMMS School of Medicine Class of 2010, wasn't able to graduate with her class. Ill with cancer at the time, she passed away that summer. She was, however, the type of person who left a lasting impression on nearly everyone who met her. Active, engaging, thoughtful, studious and compassionate, this kind and industrious young woman had a passion for learning and for helping others.

At UMass Medical School, her memory will be constantly refreshed thanks to a new endowed scholarship established by her parents. When asked what motivated them to create a scholarship in memory of their daughter, Linda Hassan Ettensohn, MD, and David Ettensohn, MD, said that Kristen left unfinished business.

“We like to think that this scholarship will enable future students to pick up where she left off,” they said.

Kristen was diagnosed with cancer in 2008, when she was a third-year medical student. After a brief period of remission in 2009, she had a relapse and died on July 11, 2010. That period of remission provides an important insight into Kristen's outlook on life and some of her unfinished business. According to Dr. Ettensohn, she used that time to sign up for a medical mission in the Dominican Republic.

“She was tired of sitting around ‘doing nothing,’” he said. “Kristen always wanted to be making things happen.”

An honor student throughout high school, Kristen constantly sought out ways to fill her time with academic, athletic or artistic endeavors. As an undergraduate studying biogenetics at Dartmouth College, for example, she conducted research at the National Institutes of Health and at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. She was also an award-winning artist and a Division 1 college athlete.

“Kristen just loved to run,” said Dr. Hassan Ettensohn. “She ran track and cross-country all four years in high school and continued with the Dartmouth track team for the next four years. She was a team captain in her senior year.”

That experience as team captain revealed the kind of doctor Kristen might have become.

“She was very tuned in to all of her teammates and she knew that many female runners struggled with anorexia,” her mother said. “She talked with women who she thought were at risk and convinced them to sign a contract with her—a commitment to maintain a healthy daily caloric intake and to conduct weekly weigh-ins.”

In addition to her many skills and talents, Kristen is best remembered by her UMMS classmates for her intense curiosity, which they say was for everything that caught her attention. According to Jhilam Biswas, MD’10, Kristen just couldn’t slow down.

“When we were on a medical mission to Peru in 2007, she told me that she wanted to walk but she had the urge to run,” said Dr. Biswas. “She said she got to see so much more of the world when she ran.”

The former team captain was still looking out for other runners well into her medical school career. Emily Marsters, MD’10, who was also on the 2007 Peru mission, was Kristen’s frequent running partner.

“She was a much better runner,” said Dr. Marsters. “Still, she would always stay one pace behind me in order to help keep me going.”

“So use your time on this earth and your time as a doctor to live and work like Kristen would have. Bring that same care, joy and enthusiasm that she would have brought to her endeavors to your own life and to your medical practice.”

When asked what she would say to a future recipient of this memorial scholarship, friend and classmate Lydia Helliwell, MD’10, said she would talk about Kristen’s love of life and impart that Kristen was someone who took advantage of every opportunity she could, and did so with great excitement.

“Everything and everyone were interesting to her,” said Dr. Helliwell. “Anyone who talked with her felt as though there was no one else in the room she’d rather be talking with.”

“So use your time on this earth and your time as a doctor to live and work like Kristen would have. Bring that same care, joy and enthusiasm that she would have brought to her endeavors to your own life and to your medical practice.”

The first Kristen Ettensohn Memorial Scholarship was awarded in fall 2015 to a first-year student.

“Being kind, helping others... that is what it was all about for Kristen,” said her parents. “We wanted to honor that and are so pleased to be able to do so.” ♦

*Family, friends, classmates and other alumni can contribute to this fund. Please contact the UMass Medical School Office of Advancement (508-856-5520, [giving@umassmed.edu](mailto:giving@umassmed.edu)) for details.*



Linda and David Ettensohn (far right and left) with their children Kristen and Derek in 2006.