

EDUCATION PARAMOUNT TO SUCCESS

Written by Susan Ingmire • Photography by Deogracias Lerma

Sometimes fathers really do know best. Take the case of Kenneth Davis Jr., now Professor of Surgery and Clinical Anesthesia and Assistant Dean for Diversity and Community Affairs at the University Of Cincinnati College of Medicine. He wanted to study astronomy. His father strongly encouraged him to consider the field of medicine, a career he always wanted for himself.

Dr. Davis has never looked back. After graduating from Woodward High School, he completed his bachelor's degree in Biology from UC and then obtained his MD from St. Louis University School of Medicine. Following medical school, he did a residency in general surgery at Harlem Hospital Center in New York and a fellowship in critical care medicine at New York Medical College. After 2 more years in NYC to gain experience, he moved back to Cincinnati in 1984, where he's been a trauma surgeon since then, rising through the ranks academically and professionally. He also does clinical research and has co-authored over 60 publications.

Dr. Davis and his wife, Johnie, met on a blind date in St. Louis. They've raised three daughters who all have advanced degrees and thriving careers. Together, Johnie and Ken share a commitment to philanthropic giving—the kind of giving that involves money, talent, and time. Ken recently returned from a week in Haiti, volunteering his time and talent to work with a team of doctors and nurses from University Hospital to staff the Bernard Mevs hospital in Port au Prince. “The needs are still so acute,” he says. “I am proud that our team helped alleviate some of the suffering.” He's also done similar trips to rural Tanzania and to Landstuh, Germany, where he treated military personnel from Iraq and Afghanistan.

For the Davises, financial giving moved beyond various “kitchen table” gifts to a whole new level when Johnie set a \$2 million goal for the scholarship fund they initiated at the University of Cincinnati Foundation in 2008. The Oxley Fund, named for Lucy Oxley, the first African American to earn a medical degree at UC in 1935, is a permanent endowment fund within the Marilyn Hughes Gaston Scholars Program at the UC College of Medicine. The fund, which makes its first

scholarship gift in 2011, will eventually underwrite the full tuition for an African-American medical student.

“The cost of medical education is astronomical and prohibits many African Americans from even considering medicine as a career,” says Johnie. “Some students graduate from medical school with as much as \$200,000 in debt. If we don't help underrepresented minority students, who will? We hope others will join us in contributing to The Oxley Fund.” Ken continues, “UC loses two-thirds of its African-American applicants to other medical schools that offer better financial aid packages. This disparity has got to end. There are very few African-American physicians in Cincinnati, a city with a 43 percent African-American population.”

Dr. Davis says, “I am a proud beneficiary of affirmative action programs, which are no longer widely available to medical students today. I had no role models or mentors going through medical school. Like Lucy Oxley, who faced discrimination and bullying from fellow students in an era when women and especially African-American women were uncommon in medical school, I was not sure I would succeed. Her perseverance is an inspiration to me as I counsel African-American medical students,” says Dr. Davis. Ken also serves on the boards of the Cincinnati Parks Foundation, the Drake Hospital Foundation and the Doctors Foundation, and is a past board member of Planned Parenthood and Caracole.

Johnie too gives of her time and talent, currently serving on the board of Mary Baldwin College, an all-women's school in Staunton, Virginia. “I love helping women achieve their potential. Getting a good education is paramount to success,” she says. She has served on the boards of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio and Cincinnati Country Day School. “Church is where I learned philanthropy,” says Johnie. “My family wasn't rich, but we did for others when we could.” An active member and elder at Carmel Presbyterian Church in Avondale, Johnie continues to serve others through her church.

To the Davises, philanthropy is organic and everlasting, like breathing. ❖



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Meet Susan Ingmire, President and Founder of Ignite Philanthropy Advisors, LLC, an independent consulting firm that serves as the trusted strategic, grantmaking and administrative staff for family, healthcare and corporate foundations. Ignite's team of advisors helps clients develop their strategic priorities, manage foundation activities, and achieve their unique philanthropic goals in innovative, practical and cost-effective ways.

In addition to ongoing advisory services, Ignite offers a philanthropic planning service to assist new foundations in organizing their giving goals and structuring an annual grantmaking process.

Ingmire bring 30+ years of relevant and responsible corporate and nonprofit experience to her clients. She was Vice President of Foundation and Endowment Services at Fifth Third Bank, Planned Giving Director of ArtsWave (formerly the Fine Arts Fund) and Vice President of InterAct for Change, a subsidiary of the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. Prior to moving to the area in 1991, she was program officer at the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation in Columbus, Indiana. A committed volunteer, Ingmire is a founding partner of Social Venture Partners Cincinnati, a venture philanthropy giving circle.

Ignite serves as the philanthropic advisor to the Doctors Foundation, where Dr. Davis is board secretary.

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