Honoring Her Husband’s Legacy

Lynda Gordon forges her own philanthropic legacy with new book series

Michael S. Gordon, M.D., Ph.D., was a legendary researcher, clinician and educator at the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine. He is most widely known for inventing Harvey®, the world’s first cardio-pulmonary patient simulator. Over a 41-year career, Dr. Gordon’s innovations eventually led to the creation of the Michael S. Gordon Center for Simulation and Innovation in Medical Education at the Miller School.

Lynda Gordon and Coogie.

Gordon’s remarkable legacy at UM is also due in part to the Gordon Family Foundation’s generous philanthropy. The Foundation not only supports the Gordon Center and the Miller
School, but the University as a whole, with donations to the Frost School of Music, athletics, and theater arts.

While Michael Gordon was the face of the foundation, many of those closest to him knew the critical role his wife, Lynda, played behind the scenes in its success. Now several years after her husband’s passing in 2017, Lynda is stepping into the spotlight and forging her own philanthropic legacy with a new children’s book series.

She grew up in a large family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She recounts learning early on that giving is a necessity in life saying, “as one of six children we learned to share and to extend that sharing beyond our own family.” Then, while suffering a medical condition that left her hospitalized, she personally experienced the impact that charitable acts can have. Those childhood experiences cemented a passion in her that would last a lifetime.

“When I first came to Miami in 1977, before I ever met Michael, I was working with the Children’s Home Society and the Miami Children’s Hospital Foundation. Sometimes I would stuff and seal the invitations for black tie balls that I couldn’t afford to attend,” Lynda said.

A Shared Passion

In fact, it was a shared passion for philanthropy that was the foundation of the Gordon’s relationship. During their 29 years of marriage, Lynda joined Michael in many of the causes that he was passionate about. She got involved with the Medical Faculty Association at the University of Miami to help fundraise for the Miller School of Medicine.
“Lynda, and her husband Dr. Michael Gordon, were generous, long-standing benefactors of several academic institutions, including the Miller School of Medicine,” said S. Barry Issenberg, M.D. ’95, professor and director of the Gordon Center, Michael S. Gordon Endowed Chair in Medical Education, and senior associate dean for research in medical education. “Since her husband’s passing, Lynda has continued to honor Michael’s legacy by supporting the Gordon Center’s training programs that reach thousands of first responders and frontline health care providers each year.”

In fact, Lynda recalls that Michael was especially proud of the Center’s work with the U.S. military medical detachment teams before deployment for active duty and the UMedic Multimedia Computer Curriculum he helped to develop continues to be used in medical centers and agencies worldwide.

In 2017 Lynda was working with FOMA (Friends of Miami Animals Foundation) when an employee at her condo found an abandoned kitten in a dumpster. He brought the kitten to Lynda and after a check-up, the veterinarian approximated the kitten was born on July 7 – the same day her husband passed. Lynda immediately knew that she needed to adopt the kitten, and it became a comfort in her grief. She named the kitten ‘Coogie.’ During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, Lynda was inspired to turn the story of Coogie the Dumpster Cat into a children’s book.
series.

Lynda says the goal of her book is to reach children across the globe with the message that regardless of where you come from you can do anything. The Gordons shared that belief, and it inspired much of their philanthropy involving education and scholarships.

A Lesson in Tenacity

“Michael studied hard, worked hard and did something spectacular,” she said. “The process of creating Harvey was not an easy one, and Michael faced many obstacles and skepticism from his colleagues. But he didn’t give up, he didn’t believe in failure. His story is truly a lesson in tenacity. “

Lynda envisions Coogie the Dumpster Cat as a series of children’s books that will loosely mirror her husband’s life and teach children life lessons along the way.

Michael and Linda Gordon, with Harvey.
“No matter the circumstance you may be born into, I want every child to know that they have the same opportunities to fulfill their dreams through hard work, perseverance and dedication,” she said.

*Coogie the Dumpster Cat* is available for pre-sale now on Amazon as a hardcover book and will be available for pre-sale by January in Kindle and audiobook form. The book will be available in bookstores nationwide on March 29 – Michael Gordon’s birthday. Each book will feature a worthy cause, with proceeds going to charity.

For more on the Michael S. Gordon Center for Simulation and Innovation in Medical Education, and *Coogie the Dumpster Cat* visit thegordonalliance.com.

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