

Healing the Heart

ALUMNUS WORKS TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE AND YOUR HEART

Every 25 seconds an American will have a heart-related problem, and every minute someone will die from one of these events, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As a cardiologist with the South Denver Cardiology Associates and the Cardiology Section Chief at Littleton Adventist Hospital, **Dr. Michael Staab ('87 finance)** sees the result of these statistics and actively works to improve the quality of patients' lives.

Heart disease remains a top killer, explains Staab. "If you are able to impact that course, you've done a tremendous service to someone. Often we see people at their worst. It's a privilege to be able to work with people and get them through difficult times. If

of the Alpha Epsilon Delta Premedical Honor Society and member of the Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society. His wife, **Brenda Brown Staab ('87 marketing)** is also a Leeds School graduate.

After graduating from the Leeds School, he spent the next 11 years in medical training. He earned a doctorate in medicine from the University of Colorado School of Medicine, served an internal medicine residency at Duke University School of Medicine (which Staab says is "a lot like boot camp"), and finished with a cardiology fellowship at the Mayo Graduate School, (a place he claims is, "the gold standard for excellence in health care"). Upon completion, Staab became a doctor in his chosen specialty - cardiology.

Staab was drawn to cardiology during his second year of medical school when he started studying different types of heart disease and became fascinated

Occasionally, uncommon cases will cross Staab's path. Recently, he saw a perfectly healthy young woman who had a spontaneous tear in her heart arteries. Another unusual case involved a healthy woman who went through a stressful life event that caused her heart to weaken, known as stress cardiomyopathy or "broken heart syndrome."

"It's a privilege to be able to work with people and get them through difficult times. If they are in the middle of a heart attack and we are able to get them through it, clearly you've made someone's life a whole lot better,"

Dr. Michael Staab ('87 finance)

they are in the middle of a heart attack and we are able to get them through it, clearly you've made someone's life better or prevented them from dying," says Staab, who has wanted to be a doctor since age 6.

"I went into the business school recognizing that business knowledge is a pretty good thing to have, even as a physician," Staab explains. He has always been an excellent student. He was a dean's scholar, graduated magna cum laude and was president

with this complicated organ. Today he talks about the heart like a knowing mechanic talks about a well-loved truck with all sorts of pieces and parts that can misfire. "The heart is basically just a pump. There are a lot of different things that can go wrong: you can have a weak heart, heart attacks, electrical problems, and valve problems," he says.

The job of a cardiologist is exciting and in no way routine. On days when Staab is on call or working in the hospital, an emergency can come at any time.



Watch as Dr. Michael Staab explains the different medical devices used to examine the heart at youtube.com/ColoradoLeeds.

Physicians have the ability to help patients prevent catastrophes with less dramatic measures such as the use of blood pressure medications or cholesterol lowering drugs. "It's nice when you see the statistics on heart disease starting to improve," he says. Today more than 90 percent of heart attack patients who reach the hospital survive.

On the day of this interview, Staab spent his morning performing heart catheterization tests, which provide doctors with a wealth of information about the heart and the blood vessels. These tests involve putting a tube, or a catheter, into a patient's arteries. Next, dye is injected in the arteries, creating a real-time X-ray image, which allows

Staab to clearly see any blockages.

"Cardiology is a nice marriage between being a thinking doctor and a procedural physician," he says.

In addition to working as a cardiologist, Staab maintains a keen interest in the business of medicine. "Medicine is an extremely big business. It's been very prominent in the national news, and we have spent many billions of dollars on health care. On one side are people who are business focused and on the other side are doctors, but I think it is very useful to have people who understand both viewpoints: the mindset of a clinician and the understanding of business and finance," he says.

Out of this idea for a better exchange

of information between doctors and business-minded people, he founded CardiologyWise® LLC. It is a cardiology-focused consulting firm for the business and the investment community. He also serves on the Provide Health Solutions Clinical Advisory Board where he advises a consulting firm on electronic medical records issues. In these roles he helps bridge the gap between medicine and business.

"I am committed to expanding my own perspective more broadly than the traditional physician does," he says. "I want to be someone that thinks more globally, in terms of ways I can participate in improving the delivery of health care."



Assess your
cardiovascular health
risks: leeds.ly/liveandlearn.