

Two High-Impact Physicians

PROVIDE GOOD VISION AND SOUND MINDS

Thank goodness physicians Robert Brown, M.D. and Bruce Bodner, M.D. bucked the odds and became the first in their Norfolk families to go to college. Bodner recalls being told in high school that he should learn a trade.

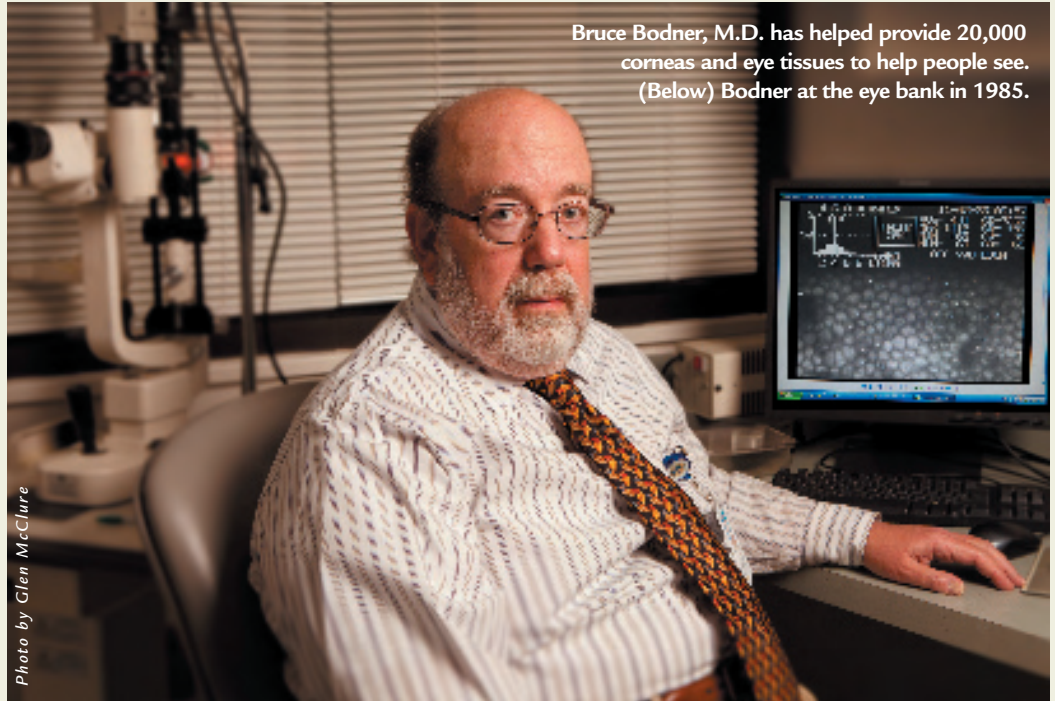
“Lucky for me my mother thought being a physician meant learning a trade,” says Bodner, whose mother encouraged him to become a doctor.

Today as co-founder and medical director of the Lions Medical Eye Bank in Norfolk, Bodner has helped give the gift of sight to thousands of people. Since 1979 the eye bank has supplied more than 20,000 corneas and eye tissue for transplants.

Recipients include 12- and 14-year-old Cassidy and Hannah Outten of Chesapeake, whose genetic eye disease forced them to hold magnifying glasses to read their school books. After their recent transplants they don’t even need to wear glasses. “Words cannot express my gratitude,” says their mother, Kim Outten.

At age 80 Bob Brown is a University of Virginia School of Medicine psychiatry professor who treats mentally devastated Army veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2005 he has helped soldiers through more than 10,000 private and group therapy sessions.

Brown and Bodner share more than being excellent physicians who grew up in Norfolk. Both are Smith Scholars – recipients of medical school scholarships provided through a bequest from the estate of the late Florence L. Smith, a physician’s daughter. In 1952 a \$460,000 gift from Smith’s estate created a permanent scholarship at the Hampton Roads Community Foundation to help Virginia medical students. By 1953 the Foundation had its first 25 scholarship recipients, including Bob Brown.



Bruce Bodner, M.D. has helped provide 20,000 corneas and eye tissues to help people see. (Below) Bodner at the eye bank in 1985.

Photo by Glen McClure

Right now 17 Smith Scholars attend EVMS, UVA or the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine. Past scholarship recipients include a president of the American Medical Association, medical missionaries, medical school faculty, clinical researchers, free clinic volunteers, health department heads and caring physicians in every specialty imaginable.

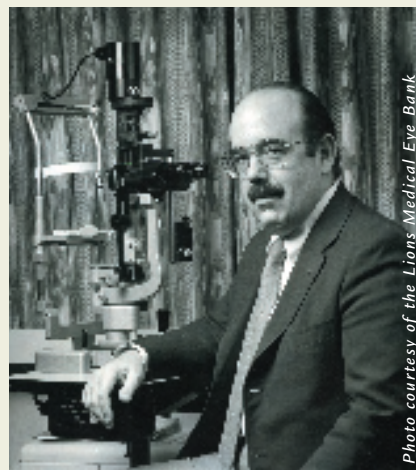
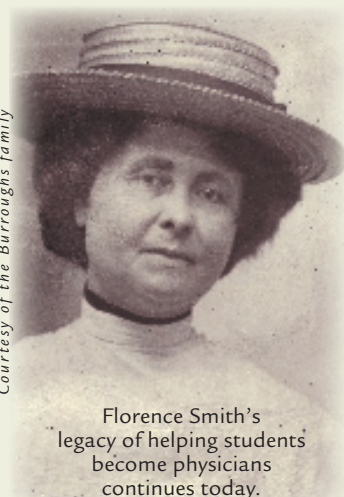


Photo courtesy of the Lions Medical Eye Bank

Brown and Bodner are just two of more than 750 Smith Scholars helped by the generosity of Florence Smith.

Brown was the youngest of six children of a house painter who couldn’t read or write. His mother only went through fourth grade. He graduated from Maury High School in 1950 and from UVA in

1953. He entered medical school that year among the first of the students helped by the Smith Scholarship. He left medical school after a year, taught high school in Norfolk, earned a Ph.D. at UVA and successfully returned to medical school 10 years later and served as class president.



Florence Smith’s legacy of helping students become physicians continues today.

IMPACT

Bruce Bodner and Bob Brown are two of the 750-plus physicians helped by Florence Smith's generosity since 1952.

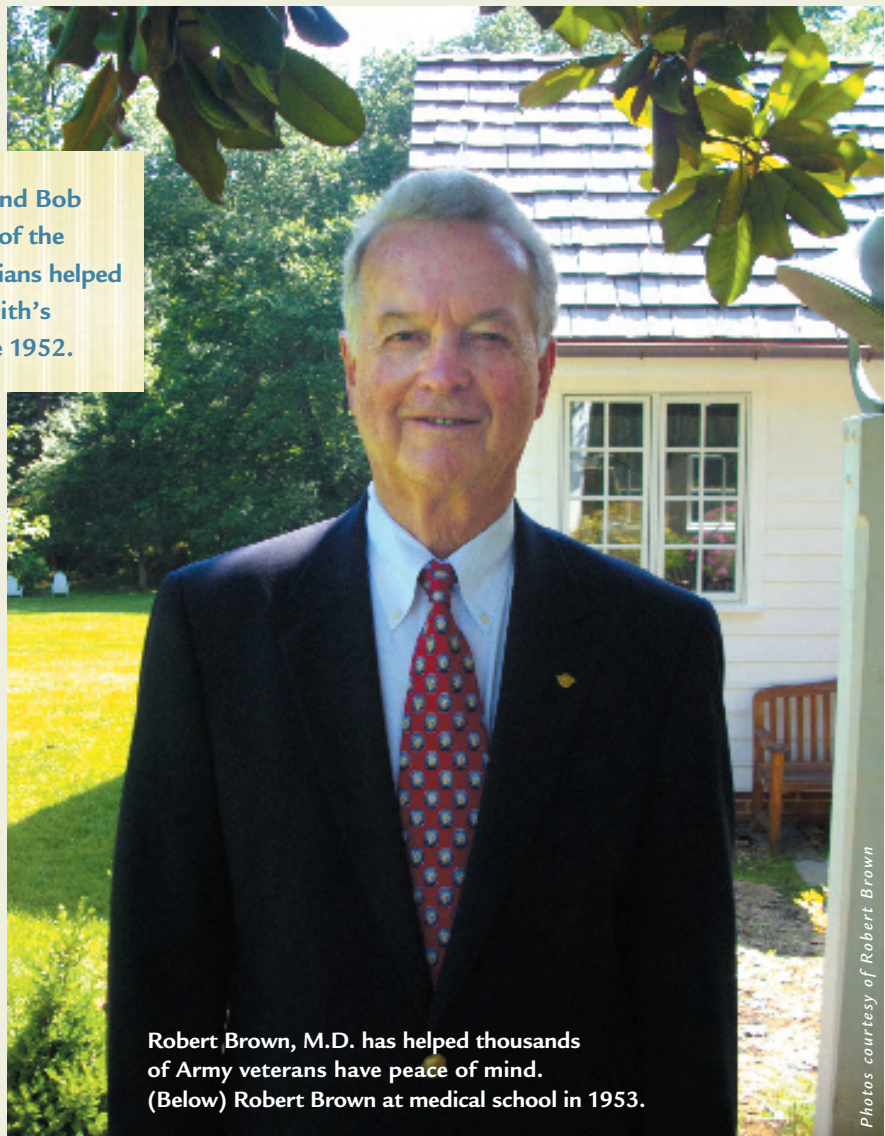
Bodner was the son of a butcher and graduated from Maury High in 1963.

He earned degrees from Virginia Military Institute in 1967 and the UVA School of Medicine in 1971. He was an Army flight surgeon before starting ophthalmology residency at Emory University. Bodner planned to stay in Atlanta, but in 1979 Lions Club members enticed him to return home to help start an eye bank.

"I saw this as an opportunity to launch a new service. This was my way of repaying the kindness of my community in educating me," says Bodner, who is on the faculty of Eastern Virginia Medical School. The eye bank is housed nearby at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital and helps train ophthalmology residents at EVMS.

"The eye bank helped attract top-notch eye surgeons to our region," says Dr. Pat Williams, EVMS professor of ophthalmology and pharmacology. With skilled surgeons and cornea and eye tissues readily available, patients like 65-year-old Jackie Howrey of Virginia Beach can have their vision restored without leaving Hampton Roads. Her recent transplant allows her to drive, read books, see vivid colors and use a computer after years of failing vision.

As a child Bob Brown dreamed of being both a doctor and a soldier. He has accomplished both with motivation from the Smith Scholarship. "Your faith and confidence in me... was an enormous incentive in my unrelenting pursuit of a medical education," Brown says.



Robert Brown, M.D. has helped thousands of Army veterans have peace of mind. (Below) Robert Brown at medical school in 1953.

Photos courtesy of Robert Brown



Brown served 24 years in the Army Reserves as a psychiatrist and also ran a private practice in Charlottesville. Today the 80-year-old physician spends five days a week working at Fort Lee near Petersburg. He treats 55 soldiers at a time with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. Using psychiatry he helps soldiers regain peaceful minds, untroubled sleep and satisfying relationships. On weekends he returns to Charlottesville to oversee a psychiatric resident at UVA.

"I've never had a job as emotionally gratifying," Brown says of his current work. "The degree of trauma our soldiers are experiencing is new." Repeated deployments and attacks by enemies who don't wear uniforms make it tough to return home and function normally. Brown's approach to helping them heal is straight-forward: "I treat everyone like a hero."

At the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, our 750-plus Smith Scholars are our heroes along with Florence Smith whose bequest allows us to give the gift of education to so many physicians.



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