



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Parents establish dissertation award to honor Cynthia Cassell

Gail H. Cassell, PhD, DSc (Hon.), and Ralph H. Cassell, MBA, are very proud of their daughter, Cynthia.

In 2007, Cynthia Cassell received a Doctor of Philosophy in maternal and child health, with a minor in epidemiology, from what is now the Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Cynthia now works with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. She is a health services researcher and focuses on health service use, costs, access to care and outcomes of children with birth defects. Recently, she won the American Public Health Association Maternal and Child Health Section's 2012 Young Professional Award for her combination of professional and personal skills, experiences, accomplishments and future impact in the maternal and child health field. She currently serves as an adviser and supporter on the School's Public Health Foundation Board.

Before Cynthia joined the CDC, the Cassells established the Cynthia H. Cassell Doctoral Dissertation Award in Maternal and Child Health to honor their daughter's many accomplishments and help support other students pursuing doctoral degrees in maternal and child health.

Through their gift, they wanted particularly to honor the mentorship offered to their daughter by Anita Farel, DrPH, clinical professor, and Robert Meyer, PhD, adjunct professor, both in the Department of Maternal and Child Health. Cynthia previously worked under Meyer's supervision with the North Carolina Birth Defects Monitoring Program, part of the N.C. State Center for Health Statistics within the N.C. Division of Public Health.

"We are pleased to provide this award at such an excellent institution," the Cassells say, "and hope in some small way that the gift will provide other maternal and child health doctoral students with opportunities they might not otherwise have had."

The Cassell family (left to right, Gail, Ralph and Cynthia) visited with children at Socios En Salud and Caryabeyllo Cultural Center, in Lima, Peru, in April 2012. In 2005, the family helped establish the Center to address medical and social issues related to drug-resistant tuberculosis, which is common in the Caryabeyllo district of Lima.

Eli Lilly and Company, from which Gail recently retired after 13 years, matched the Cassells' gift to double the impact of the couple's generosity.

Cynthia says she is proud to call herself a Carolina public health school alumna. "Many rewarding opportunities were provided by my parents and outstanding mentors at Carolina, including Drs. Anita Farel, Robert Meyer, Bert Peterson, Jonathan Kotch and Ron Strauss," she says. "I was uplifted by their wisdom and continuous generosity. They are inspiring role models in public health, especially maternal and child health. With this award, we hope that other students will be as fortunate as I was to learn from these outstanding faculty members."

—Linda Kastleman

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