

Dad taught her teamwork, Mom taught her science, now Devlin honors them with her gift



Dr. Leah Devlin

As a child, North Carolina State Health Director Leah Devlin spent Sunday afternoons learning how to play basketball. Her father, Fred McCall, worked as a basketball coach and college administrator for 43 years at Campbell University, and he took his wife and children to many of his games.

“What it means to be part of a team and how important it is to stay healthy and physically active,” says Devlin, “I learned from my dad.”

Devlin says she got her natural interest in the sciences from her mother, Pearle, who was a biology professor at Campbell University. Both parents also

taught her the value of community service and higher education. “They were public servants in an institution of higher learning,” says Devlin. “So they gave me this notion that it’s important to give back, to keep an open hand, especially when it comes to educating people.”

Now Devlin is giving back to the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health through the Fred and Pearle McCall Scholarship in Public Health, a \$25,000 gift meant to support the education of highly qualified graduate students seeking a degree in Public Health. Devlin earned a master’s in public health administration from the School and a doctor of dental surgery from the UNC School of Dentistry.

With the public health system facing enormous challenges in terms of workforce development, Devlin has chosen to give her gift to students who have demonstrated a strong commitment to public health practice. “It’s a small effort really, given the enormity of the problem,” she says, “but we need to do everything we can to make sure that young people who want to get engaged in health improvement have the skills and tools they need.”

Devlin says that the UNC School of Public Health has been the foundation of her career in public health. “I have a lot of respect for the quality of the programs and the faculty and the way they prepare the workforce for the future,” she says. “I am very grateful for the opportunity and the training they have afforded me, and as my parents have always taught me, I’m giving something back.” ■

— BY MARGARITA DE PANO