

## Named Endowed Funds

### The Ricard and Barbara Puumala Family Fund



When asked why they established the Puumala Family Fund, Drs Ricard and Barbara Puumala said, “We want to give something back to the Cloquet Schools.”

The fund honors the education the Puumala children received in the Cloquet School System. The Puumala’s four children also participated in several extracurricular activities such as the gifted and talented programs, drama, theater and music programs. These activities are now funded in part by the Cloquet Educational Foundation. The Puumalas wanted to ensure that these vital supplementary educational opportunities will continue to serve Cloquet students now and into the future.

All four of the Puumala children graduated as the valedictorian of their respective high school graduating classes. Victoria, class of ‘79, completed her post secondary education in the field of medicine and is currently practicing medicine in Cloquet. Son Michael, class of ‘81, also followed in the steps of the family and is a neurosurgeon in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.



Laura graduated from CHS in 1985. During her junior year of college she was selected to attend a year at Oxford University in England. Today, Laura is an associate pastor at First Lutheran Church in Duluth. The Puumala’s fourth child, Matthew, class of 1992, is an information specialist at the University of Minnesota. He was enthralled with computers from an early age and his technical aptitude was apparent as Ricard remembers when Matthew’s third grade teacher called their home asking if Matthew could help her with a computer problem.

In the history of Cloquet there are very few names as ubiquitous as Puumala. Their close association with the city began in 1936 when Ricard’s parents, Dr. Reino H. Puumala and Dr. Marie Bepko Puumala, answered an advertisement for a Finnish-speaking doctor.

The young couple was quickly welcomed by the large Finnish community, most of whom were more comfortable speaking in their native tongue. In the mid 1940s, the Puumalas purchased the old public sauna building at 40 South 12th Street in Cloquet and converted it into what would become the Puumala Clinic.

Ricard attended Cloquet Schools, beginning at Garfield Elementary School, where he proudly remembers being a member of the kindergarten band. He graduated from Cloquet High School in 1952. Continuing the family tradition of medicine, Ricard began studying pre-med and medicine at the University of Minnesota. This is also where he met his wife of 49 years, Barbara Meyer.

Barbara, whose father was also a general practitioner, was raised in Kenyon, Minnesota. When she attended the University of Minnesota's medical program, she was one of only six female students within a class of 120. She and Ricard were married in their senior year.

In 1960, the young Puumala's joined the Puumala Clinic in general practice. Within the year, the Berlin Crisis sent Dr. Ricard into the Army for two years during which time their family increased to two children. When they returned to Cloquet, Dr. Barbara began work as a contract physician at the Moose Lake State Hospital while Dr. Ricard concentrated on working in his father's clinic.

The Puumalas served the people of Cloquet as both doctors and citizens, and in 1996 the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians recognized Dr. Ricard Puumala as the Family Physician of the Year.

The Puumalas recall that it was the many wonderful teachers and school staff members such as Jack Sampson, Marcella Colberg, Aili Siltanen, Laina Alatalo, Corrine Lauterbach, Mary Sanderson, Alma Hoye, Ludwig Hiti, Alana Friedman, Bill Kennedy, Shirley Bushey, Julie Barthodi McMerty, Sue Karp, Tony Jirschele and Don and Pauline Schroeder; that made a positive influence in their lives and in the lives of their children.

"These teachers led by example. They grounded us in the basic course work so we could go in advanced education" said Ricard. "I felt inspired to excellence by their leadership. I felt the school system set up good standards and good instructors to implement them. The extracurricular activities mirrored this degree of excellence. I personally felt I was treated very well by the Cloquet school system. I'm proud to be a graduate."