Colleagues Surprise Dr. LaSalle Leffall with 85th Birthday Celebration

Family, friends, students, colleagues, mentors and fellow physicians surprised Howard University Hospital’s world-renowned surgical oncologist, Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, on Monday, May 18, with an 85th birthday celebration.

Washington, DC (PRWEB) May 22, 2015 -- Family, friends, students, colleagues, mentors and fellow physicians surprised Howard University Hospital’s world-renowned surgical oncologist, Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, on Monday, May 18, with an 85th birthday celebration.

The luncheon began after Grand Rounds in the hospital’s Tower Auditorium. Leffall’s younger sister, 83-year-old Dr. Delores Leffall, waited anxiously outside the auditorium, trying to keep the secret. “I’d like to go in and hear him, but if he sees me, he’ll know something is up,” she said.

After more than 60 years of being a student and educator at Howard University and Howard University Hospital (HUH), Dr. Leffall is no stranger to celebrations. He was the first African-American president of the following organizations: the American Cancer Society, the Society of Surgical Oncology, the Society of Surgical Chairmen, the Washington Academy of Surgery and the American College of Surgeons. He holds 14 honorary doctorate degrees from universities including Georgetown University, University of Maryland, Princeton University, Amherst College and Thomas Jefferson University. Furthermore, he has been appointed to medical commissions by five U.S. presidents: Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Dr. Edward O. Cornwell, III, surgeon-in-chief and chair of the Department of Surgery at the College of Medicine, highlighted Dr. Leffall’s achievements and legacy during the welcome. Dr. Cornwell reflected on his professional successes and also noted the many personal successes Dr. Leffall has had as a husband, father and mentor.

Speaking fondly of Dr. Leffall, he thanked him for his guidance and friendship. “There is always a quote you live by; mine is equanimity under duress, which Dr. Leffall has exemplified and I’ve subscribed to.”

HUH CEO James Edwards greeted the visitors and expressed his excitement and appreciation for Dr. Leffall’s contributions to the hospital. Afterwards, an eight-minute video, titled A Cancer Surgeon’s Odyssey, was shown. The video chronicles the start of Dr. Leffall’s academic and medical career. Copies of the video will accompany Dr. Leffall’s second and most recent book, *Equanimity Under Duress: Calmness and Courage in the Battle Against Cancer*. Proceeds from book sales will be donated to the University.

The program portion of the celebration came to a close as Dr. Leffall spoke about his life experiences and addressed his guests, thanking them for their attendance and acknowledging the staff who coordinated the luncheon. He ended with a tribute to the students he has taught over the years saying, “I never thought a medical class would be more enthusiastic than my own. But through the years these students prove time and again that they are excited and passionate about the study of medicine. That makes me proud.”

The festivities ended with a catered reception, photos and fellowship.
Contact Information
Brittany A.B. Surratt
Howard University
http://www.howard.edu
+1 (202) 238-2394

Sholnn Freeman
Howard University Hospital
http://www.huhealthcare.com
(202) 865-3518

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