

The Province

Rix was successful entrepreneur who mentored others

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Illustrations: Colour Photo: Dr. Don Rix became a leader in B.C. biomedics.

Dr. Don Rix, who went from running a small general medical practice in Vancouver to becoming a leader in B.C.'s biomedical field, has died. He was 78.

A legend in Canadian scientific and business circles, Rix was a pioneer in the field of life sciences.

For the past 40 years he oversaw the growth of two private lab operations, financed the work of dozens of fellow scientists and gave millions back to the community.

He was a community volunteer, philanthropist, investor and mentor to countless young entrepreneurs, said Jan Bell-Irving, president of the Junior Achievement of B.C.

Rix, who began his long career in medicine as a general practitioner, became an enthusiastic supporter of youth, education, the arts and entrepreneurship.

As founder and chairman of MDS Metro (now LifeLabs), chairman of the B.C. Innovation Council, chairman of Genome B.C. and a member of the Premier's Technology Council, Rix was regarded as a pioneer of the local biotech industry.

"We are saddened by the loss of such a great supporter and mentor of young people," Bell-Irving said Saturday. "Don Rix was an important and valued friend of junior achievement.

"His recent [\$400,000] gift to junior achievement demonstrated his belief that we must build an innovative and entrepreneurial workforce in B.C."

Last May, Rix and daughter Laurie Macrae donated \$2.5 million to the University of B.C. to create a professorship in rural teacher education. The award was named the Eleanor Rix professorship to honour Rix's wife, a former teacher who died in 2007.

He gave about \$9.5 million over the years to UBC for a variety of different programs.

Rix was inducted into the Business Laureates of B.C. Hall of Fame in 2006 and received the Order of British Columbia in 2004 and the Order of Canada in 2008.

He was chairman of the Vancouver Board of Trade until last June.

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