

## Merritt Henderson, 76: Hospital leader

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Merritt Henderson didn't realize he was signing on for more than three decades at the helm of a new hospital when he answered a newspaper ad in 1958.

Hired to manage a staff of four financial employees, the farm boy turned administrator began work even before Mississauga's South Peel Hospital took in its first patient.

Within a few years, he rose to become its president and CEO, leading the way as it became Mississauga Hospital and later, after his retirement in 1994, Trillium Health Centre.

Henderson died March 30 at 76 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

"He was a kind, gentle man who treated all people with respect and received respect in return," said Scott Campbell, chair of Trillium's board of directors.

"It's not very often you find someone who is such a visionary, such a leader."

Janet Davidson, Trillium's current president and CEO, said Henderson ran the hospital without a budget deficit, yet always delivered quality health care.

She called him "a beacon, a kind, gentle man who made sure the hospital provided the best care it could for the people of Mississauga.

"To take a hospital from scratch, build it in the community and then leave it as a great exemplar, is a real legacy," she said.

"He was a real caring man."

The Lorne Park resident was named Businessman of the Year by the Mississauga Board of Trade, was president of the Ontario Hospital Association and a director of the Canadian Hospital Association.

Henderson was also on the board of the Canadian Cancer Research Foundation.

An education fund for the children of hospital employees was created in his name to encourage young people seeking a career in health care.

Henderson lived the Golden Rule, his family said in a statement.

"He was filled with love, compassion and integrity, touching everyone in his life with his kindness and genuine interest in them," the family said.

"To describe in words our loss and express how much we will miss him is just not possible.

"He was the sunshine in our lives and our memories will keep him ever near."

Known for his smile and accessibility, Mr. Henderson said he felt it was "important for me to communicate with the staff face to face so that they knew who I was and I knew who they were."

Mr. Henderson is survived by his wife, Frances, three children and three stepchildren.