Saverin Family’s $20 million gift is the largest to metastatic breast cancer research in Dana-Farber history

There is currently no cure for metastatic breast cancer. The Saverin Family hopes to change that with a $20 million gift to establish the Saverin Breast Cancer Research Fund at Dana-Farber under the direction of Eric Winer, MD, chief of the Division of Breast Oncology in the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. The largest individual gift to breast cancer research in Dana-Farber’s history, this transformative gift builds on the strong foundation of the late Susan F. Smith’s vision for collaborative research and care for women’s cancers, and provides powerful momentum toward the Institute’s comprehensive campaign, currently in the quiet phase.

Metastatic breast cancer is breast cancer that has spread to distant parts of the body, such as the bones, brain, liver, and lungs. The population of metastatic breast cancer patients is growing: of the 250,000 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in the U.S. each year, more than 15,000 are metastatic at diagnosis. And researchers estimate that 20 to 25 percent of patients treated for early breast cancer will ultimately develop metastatic disease, despite advances in early stage treatment.

Current treatment for metastatic breast cancer focuses on extending and ensuring the best possible quality of life for patients. While new therapies, including targeted treatments and novel drug combinations, help women with metastatic breast cancer live well for many years, there is still an urgent need for more second- and third-line treatment options.

The Saverin Family’s confidence in Winer’s ability to improve the prognosis for this growing population is well-founded. Winer, who is also senior vice president for medical affairs, chief clinical strategy officer, and the Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research at Dana-Farber, has made seminal contributions to improve the treatment of breast cancer. Under the direction of Winer, Nancy Lin, MD, associate chief of the Division of Breast Oncology and the director of the Metastatic Breast Cancer Program in the Susan F. Smith Center, started the EMBRACE (Ending Metastatic Breast Cancer for Everyone) program at Dana-Farber, which enrolls patients with metastatic breast cancer to enhance involvement in clinical research studies. At the same time, the program provides patients with support services and assistance with coordination of care.

“The Saverin Family’s foresight will allow us to tackle the unsolved challenges by building on the advances we have already forged, and to develop entirely new strategies,” said Winer. “Their exceptional generosity provides resources we need to further metastatic breast cancer research that is underway, and, more importantly, to open bold avenues of investigation.”

“The Saverin Breast Cancer Research Fund will help advance studies into the intractable challenges of resistance to hormonal treatments and targeted therapies. Winer will assemble an external advisory board that will advise experts from Dana-Farber to help steer research supported by the Saverin Breast Cancer Research Fund.

“This gift will make a profound difference in the lives of people living with breast cancer today and in the future, and we are incredibly grateful to the Saverin Family.”

— LAURIE H. GLIMCHER, MD, president and CEO, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Dear Friends,

This summer marked a major milestone in the history of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and of hematology and pediatric oncology in general: the 90th birthday of David G. Nathan, MD, the Institute’s 5th President and a renowned pediatric hematologist/oncologist. I was privileged to enjoy lunch with Dr. Nathan shortly before his birthday, where he fascinated and delighted me with stories of progress in cancer science and medicine, particularly during his tenure at Dana-Farber.

As has happened so often since coming to Dana-Farber earlier this year, I was once again astonished by new details about the seminal role Dana-Farber has played in the field of cancer research and care. Dr. Nathan spoke of working to turn the tide in cancer alongside giants like founder Sidney Farber, MD, who introduced focused cancer chemotherapy to medicine; Emil Frei III, MD, the father of combination chemotherapy; and Baruj Benacerraf, MD, who won the Nobel Prize for discoveries in immunology. His stories brought to life a world where striving to cure childhood cancer was an outrageously idea, where researchers and clinicians collaborating to bring treatments from the laboratory bench to the patient’s bedside was novel, and where treating the patient with supportive services, not just medicine, was an innovation.

These pioneering approaches have set the standard for cancer treatment everywhere, and it remains a high bar—one that was recognized once again this summer by U.S. News and World Report’s Best Hospitals Guide, in which Dana-Farber is the top ranked cancer center in New England, and is in the top five in the nation for both adult and pediatric cancer programs. The Institute’s excellence was also recently recognized by generous donors including the Savenns Family, whose magnificent commitment of $20 million to spark innovation in metastatic breast cancer research is the largest to this purpose in Dana-Farber’s history, and by Stand Up To Cancer, with grants totaling $4 million to collaborative projects designed to accelerate new treatments in pancreatic cancer and high-risk pediatric cancers. Our historic partner, the all-volunteer Friends of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, reached a milestone of their own by raising a record $500,000 in one night at their annual Dinner with Friends, bringing their total fundraising for Dana-Farber to more than $35 million since 1976. And these are just a few of the donors and participants across the country and around the globe who make up our tremendous community of support.

There is so much more to the story of Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund—a story in which you, our generous donors, play an essential part. I look forward to turning new pages with you as we build on our history to work toward our desired future without cancer.

Sincerely,

Melany N. Duval
Senior Vice President, Chief Philanthropy Officer

Dana-Farber celebrates 90th birthday of David G. Nathan, MD

S urrounded by family, friends, colleagues, and Institute Trustees, David G. Nathan, MD, was the center of a special celebration at Dana-Farber in May, recognizing his 90th birthday.

A world-renowned hematologist and pediatric oncologist, Nathan served as president of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute from 1995 to 2000. During a challenging time in the Institute’s history, he led a transformation from a highly regarded regional cancer center to the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center, one of the largest cancer research centers in the world. In the years prior, Nathan led pediatric hematology and oncology at Boston Children’s Hospital and Dana-Farber, launching a world-class training program in pediatric hematology and making seminal discoveries in blood disorders. His book with Frank Orski, MD, The Hematology of Infancy and Childhood, remains the leading reference to this day.

Nathan credits his mentors with setting him on his successful path and has strived to pay it forward, training hundreds of physicians and scientists who have become leaders in pediatrics, oncology, and internal medicine—including Institute President and CEO Emeritus Edward J. Benz Jr., MD, who succeeded Nathan in the role; Stuart Orkin, MD, past chair of Pediatric Oncology at Dana-Farber and the first David G. Nathan Professor of Medicine; and David Williams, MD, president of Dana-Farber/Boston Children’s Cancer and Blood Disorders Center.

Throughout the birthday celebration, “I owe my career to this man,” was a constant theme, as were Nathan’s humanity, humor, unwavering commitment to improving the lives of patients, and emphasis on the importance of family—describing his own family as the source of his “most profound happiness.”

Nathan has garnered the top national awards in pediatrics, internal medicine, and hematology, as well as the National Medal of Science. But his greatest reward is perhaps the love and respect of his family and of his “second family” here at Dana-Farber and in the world of cancer science and medicine. Said Ed Benz, “There are so many people who come behind us whose lives will be enriched and whose contributions will be ever greater because of their association with you.”

Dana-Farber study reveals 60-year-old chemotherapy drug also spurs immune system response

M ore than 60 years ago, British physician Denis Parsons Burkitt and his associates achieved one of the signal successes in cancer medicine when they cured children in sub-Saharan Africa with a form of lymphoma by treating them with high doses of the chemotherapy drug cyclophosphamide. Now, in a study funded in part by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and National Cancer Institute (NCI), Dana-Farber Cancer Institute researchers have shown that the traditional understanding of the drug’s mode of action is incomplete.

The researchers demonstrated that large doses of cyclophosphamide not only kill cancer cells directly, as has been known, but also spur an immune system attack on the cells. The discovery resolves long-standing questions about how cyclophosphamide and other alkylating agents—among the oldest and most widely used types of chemotherapy—work, and suggests a novel way of sparking an immune system strike on certain cancers.

“Our results show that, at high doses, cyclophosphamide and other alkylating agents blur the line between chemotherapy and immunotherapy,” said Dana-Farber’s David Weinstein, MD, the senior author of the study. “These findings offer insights into how to switch from one immune system cells to augment existing therapies.”

Cyclophosphamide and other alkylating agents are now used at lower doses to treat many types of cancer, including breast, ovarian, and pediatric cancers. Although high doses of these drugs may be too toxic for patients with diseases other than Burkitt lymphoma, researchers are investigating agents that mimic their function, but with milder side effects.

Dana-Farber is a top recipient of federal grants that lead to discoveries such as this, thanks to generous donors who support our innovative research in its early stages.

Funding for this study was provided by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (award number T23GM08057); the Cancer Systems Biology Consortium (U54CA217377); NIH New Innovator Awards (1DP2OD030839, 1U24AI118672, 1K33CA202820, 2U19AI089992, 1R01HL134339, 2R01HL060193, and 2P01AI093671); and partially by Cancer Center Support Grant P30-CA14051 from the National Cancer Institute; and other private funders.
Pinards invest $3 million in cutting-edge kidney cancer research

Lorraine Dana-Farber supporters Katherine and Steve Pinard have made an extraordinary $3 million gift to support the work of Toni Choueiri, MD, director of the Lank Center for Genitourinary Oncology, in innovative clinical and basic science kidney cancer research.

“The Pinards’ funding also supports Choueiri’s close collaborations with several other laboratories at Dana-Farber focused on epigenetics, data science and computational oncology, early detection and screening efforts, and undruggable transcription factors—proteins that regulate genes by binding to nearby DNA—all of which contribute to furthering treatments for rare, aggressive forms of kidney cancer.”

“It is gratifying to see the medical knowledge, technology, and genetics coming together. It’s clear we are funding the development of cures in our lifetime.”

—GRÁINNE OWEN, founder and president, Curing Kids Cancer

Curing kids’ cancer in our lifetime

Recently, Curing Kids Cancer (CKC) awarded two grants totaling $250,000 to Dana-Farber physician-scientists Maxim Pimkin, MD, PhD, and Loren Walensky, MD, PhD, who are developing innovative treatments for leukemia and brain cancer, respectively. Over its 14-year history, CKC has raised more than $15 million for pediatric cancer research, evolving from its beginning when Gráinne Owen established the charity in memory of her son Killian Owen, who passed away from acute lymphocytic leukemia at the age of 9. Though CKC has expanded into a variety of fundraising initiatives over the years, its core mission remains the same: cure kids’ cancer.

Walensky is exploring the use of a new stapled peptide drug developed in his lab as a potential treatment for pediatric high-grade gliomas. This is the first and only available drug prototype that can block both the HDMI2 and HDMX proteins and reactivate the tumor suppressor protein p53, a new approach to treating these aggressive cancers. Pimkin is studying abnormalities in proteins called transcription factors, which contribute to tumor development and cancer progression. His results could improve methods for predicting tumor vulnerabilities and identify novel therapeutic targets for acute myeloid leukemia.

“It is gratifying to see the medical knowledge, technology, and genetics coming together,” said Gráinne Owen, Killian’s mother and the founder and president of CKC. “It’s clear we are funding the development of cures in our lifetime.”

Curing kids’ cancer in our lifetime

Sunshine and smiles abound at Jimmy Fund Scooper Bowl®

The 37th annual Jimmy Fund Scooper Bowl® presented by Valvoline Instant Oil Change® returned to Boston City Hall Plaza June 4–6, serving unlimited sweet scoops and smiles to ice cream lovers of all ages. This year’s event, including the second Scoop at Night presented by The Herb Chambers Companies, raised more than $470,000 for the Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, bringing the total since 1983 to $7.1 million.

Chairman of the Jimmy Fund Larry Lucchino joined Hannah Serpa, age 4, a patient in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic, to kick off the event and dish out the first scoops from baskin-robbins®, ben & jerry’s®, breyers®, edy’s®, friendly’s®, HP Hood®, lactaid, sweetie, and yasso.

For ice cream lovers ages 21 or older, Bart’s Ice Cream Co., beckoni™, and Blake’s Creamery served treats to a sold-out crowd on June 6 at Boston’s sweetest happy hour, Scoop at Night. The after-work hot-spot featured live music, games, and beverages from Harpoon Brewery, 90s Cellars, and Arctic Summer, and raised nearly $50,000 in its second year.

More than 40,000 people stopped by over the course of the three days, including school groups who participated in Jimmy Fund Scooper Schools presented by Must Be The Milk. The program, which teaches students the importance of volunteerism and giving back by fundraising for the Jimmy Fund throughout the year, raised over $25,000 in 2019.

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Volunteers at the 2019 Scooper Bowl dished out sweet treats to more than 40,000 ice cream lovers.
Stand Up To Cancer invests $4 million in collaborative effort to accelerate drug discovery

Since its inception in 2008, Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C) has been a powerful ally to Dana-Farber, partnering with the Institute’s investigators to expedite translational research and deliver new treatments to patients. In keeping with this longstanding tradition, SU2C recently awarded a total of $4 million in grants to catalyze the research of Alan D’Andrea, MD, Kimberly Stegmaier, MD, and Steven Dubois, MD, MS. Both grants mandate collaboration across the cancer research community, bringing together great minds to help cancer patients all over the world.

D’Andrea was awarded $1 million to lead a multidisciplinary team in the Pancreatic Cancer Collective’s New Therapies Challenge, a strategic collaboration of the Lustgarten Foundation and SU2C to accelerate pancreatic cancer research and improve patient outcomes for this difficult disease. D’Andrea, director of Dana-Farber’s Center for DNA Damage and Repair, will co-lead the team with James Cleary, MD, as they work to improve the efficacy of PARP inhibitors, which target DNA repair genes, by identifying combination therapies that synergize with the drug. To accomplish this goal, Cleary and D’Andrea, along with Geoffrey Shapiro, MD, PhD, clinical director of the Center for DNA Damage and Repair, will study three classes of DNA repair targeted therapies: CHK1, ATR, and PARP inhibitors, as single agents and then as combinations in patient-derived tumor models. They will then select the most efficacious drug combinations and perform drug testing in models that closely replicate human pancreatic cancer. These experiments will allow them to evaluate the feasibility of clinical trials.

“I am deeply grateful to Stand Up To Cancer for their generous grant, which demonstrates the powerful impact of team science,” said D’Andrea. “Their support has helped us leverage bright minds across the Institute, working together to deliver novel treatment options to our pancreatic cancer patients.”

Stegmaier, vice chair of pediatric oncology research and the Ted Williams Chair at Dana-Farber, along with co-leader Dubois, director of experimental therapeutics at Dana-Farber, were awarded a $3 million Pediatric SU2C Catalyst Grant, supported by a charitable donation from Bristol-Myers Squibb. This initiative aims to accelerate the process by which new cancer therapies are tested, approved, and integrated into the standard of care for pediatric patients. Currently, new treatments must be proven safe and effective in adults before they are introduced into pediatric studies. This process often delays pediatric access to promising therapies up to seven years. Stegmaier and her team will leverage this funding to explore the efficacy of bromodomain and extra-terminal motif (BET) inhibitors, which have been shown to reduce expression of cancer-promoting transcription factors—proteins that turn genes on or off—in high-risk childhood cancers. This grant will empower Stegmaier, Dubois, and their team to launch the first pediatric clinical trial of BET inhibitors.

“This Pediatric SU2C Catalyst grant brings together a unique team of accomplished investigators with complementary expertise,” said Stegmaier. “Thank you to Stand Up To Cancer for helping us bring new therapies to children.”

“We are excited to support this cutting-edge research by Drs. D’Andrea, Stegmaier, and Dubois which we hope will deliver benefits to pancreatic and pediatric cancer patients,” said SU2C President and CEO Sung Poblete, PhD, RN. “Dana-Farber scientists have been enthusiastic in participating in SU2C’s unique funding models that accelerate innovative cancer research, through which Dr. D’Andrea has extended his expertise in DNA-repair from pediatrics into ovarian cancer and now pancreatic cancer. Dr. Stegmaier, first supported for high-risk/high-reward research as an early-career Innovative Research Grantee is now leading a team with Dr. Dubois to accelerate pediatric treatment clinical trials. ■

DFMC exceeds $6 million goal

In June, the 2019 Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge (DFMC) Top Pacesetters Reception celebrated the fundraising accomplishments of 163 DFMC Boston Marathon® runners who reached the season’s key Pacesetter milestones of $13 K, $20K, and $26.2K. The reception took place at Dana-Farber’s Yawkey Center for Cancer Care, where honorees listened to remarks by Shruti Bhatti, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow whose work is supported by the Institute’s Claudia Adams Barr Program for Innovative Basic Cancer Research. Since its inception 30 years ago, the DFMC team has raised more than $99 million with 100 percent of every runner-raised dollar supporting the Claudia Adams Barr Program.

Pictured above, the top three fundraisers (from left) Lindsay Mullaney, Erin Mullaney, RN, and Lindsay Cronin move the fundraising course map marker to Mile 26.2 to signify that the 2019 DFMC team exceeded its $6 million goal and is still counting toward its season total.

“When Buying Time” by funding physician-scientists

When Danny Butler was battling stage IV colorectal cancer at age 39, the prognosis was not good. But after countless doctors said he had no more than six months to live, one physician-scientist did what no one else thought possible—he bought Danny five more years with his family. Dave Butler was inspired by the game-changing care his brother received from this physician-scientist, an oncologist who both treats patients in the clinic and conducts research to improve treatment options. In his brother’s memory, Dave founded Buying Time/The Danny Butler Memorial Fund, Inc., and began hosting an annual gala to raise funds for world-leading physician-scientists.

At one of these events, Dave was introduced to Dana-Farber by Tom Brokaw, NBC News special correspondent and cancer patient, who spoke at the event. Brokaw was accompanied by his doctor, Kenneth Anderson, MD, director of Dana-Farber’s Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center and Lelok Institute for Myeloma Therapeutics. “Ken is the undisputed heavyweight champion for myeloma research,” said Dave, who recently supported Anderson’s research with a $100,000 gift through the fund. “At this level, medicine isn’t science, it’s art. These doctors convert research dollars into years of your life.”

Anderson, who is also the Kraft Family Professor of Medicine, said, “This generous support will help us more rapidly develop novel treatments so patients and their families can share the joys of life together. There is no greater gift than this.” ■

In memory of his brother Danny Butler (center), Dave Butler (left) supports world-class physician-scientists.
Executive Council Breakfast supports women’s cancers

Each spring, the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers Executive Council hosts a breakfast to raise funds and showcase the center’s efforts to develop innovative therapies for breast and gynecologic cancers. This Executive Council of women business and community leaders has generated more than $18 million to support women’s cancers research and treatment at Dana-Farber since 2002. The 16th annual breakfast in April welcomed more than 300 guests to the Mandarin Oriental, Boston and raised more than $275,000 for the Center’s Innovation Fund. Guests were treated to an update on the Susan F. Smith Center by Director Alan D’Andrea, MD, and learned about the latest in research and patient care from a panel of center leaders. Dana-Farber patient Shelley Smalley of Holliston, Mass., drove home the benefits of Dana-Farber care with her story about the choices she faced as a breast cancer patient and as a survivor facing an increased risk of developing the disease again.

Breakfast attendees also learned about four promising research projects supported in part by grants from the Innovation Fund. Rinath Jeselsohn, MD, Jennifer Liggibl, MD, Beth Mittenhof, MD, PhD, and Huma Rana, MD, each received grants to help advance early stage research projects in breast and ovarian cancers aimed at improving the future of cancer care.

Dana-Farber Society Dinner celebrates legacy donors

On May 14, the 29th annual Dana-Farber Society Recognition Dinner celebrated the successes in cancer research and patient care made possible through the generosity of the Dana-Farber Society (DFS). This group of individuals, who have remembered Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund in their estate plans, gathered at the Mandarin Oriental, Boston to enjoy dinner and remarks by keynote speaker Larry Bacow, the 29th president of Harvard University. Bacow emphasized that the innovation and discovery happening here in Boston—at Dana-Farber and in collaboration with Harvard—is helping to shape the future of cancer medicine and bring new treatments to our patients.

Dana-Farber’s commitment to our patients and our research mission is made possible by the generosity of DFS donors who have chosen to invest in the future of the Institute and create a legacy of support for years to come. Above from left: Institute Trustees and Dana-Farber Society Co-Chairs Jim and Barbara Sadowsky with Larry Bacow.

Charles A. King Trust builds next generation of basic scientists

Over its 80-year history, the Charles A. King Trust—with Bank of America and its predecessor banks serving as corporate trustee—has been committed to supporting the next generation of scientific leaders through its robust fellowship program in basic science. Recently, the King Trust awarded two fellowships with grants totaling over $200,000 to Dana-Farber’s Mark Zimmerman, PhD, and Gloria Sheynkman, PhD, who are digging into the biology of cancer to find new therapeutic targets in melanoma and neuroblastoma.

Zimmerman is studying transcription factors that are mutated in pediatric neuroblastoma and how this information can be used for the benefit of patients. By uncovering the epigenetics regulating neuroblastoma cell growth and survival, he aims to reveal new ways of reprogramming the identity of malignant cancer cells.

Sheynkman will map changes in melanoma. Sheynkman represents the next big ideas in precision medicine.”

“We are committed to making a lasting impact on the careers of young investigators,” said Kimberly Lenak, interim director of The Medical Foundation at Health Resources in Action, which administers the King Trust Fellowship. “Zimmerman and Sheynkman embody the types of investigators we seek to support. They represent the next big ideas in precision medicine, and we look forward to seeing the influence they will undoubtedly have in improving cancer treatment.”

THE GENE DISPLAY
IN THE ROBERT J. TOMSICH FAMILY GALLERY

Make your mark on cancer

Name a gene in the Gene Display, located in Dana-Farber’s Yawkey Center for Cancer Care. This unique opportunity allows you to honor a family member, friend, physician, or caregiver with a lasting tribute that also fuels groundbreaking research and patient care. Genes can be named individually or as a group with a gift of $5,000, payable over one or two years.

Name a gene today.

Please contact Mariah Garcia at (617) 632-6099 | Gene_Display@dfci.harvard.edu

Learn more at NameAGene.org
Gillen Family supports promising advances in lung cancer research

Since Bill and Lynne Gillen established the James B. Gillen Thoracic Oncology Research Fund at Dana-Farber in 2007, lung cancer survival rates have risen, according to the American Cancer Society.

Institute Trustee Bill Gillen, who lost his father, James, to the disease, credits the Institute for key advances, “especially in terms of targeted therapies and treatments combined with immunotherapy,” Gillen says. “But more work is crucial.”

The Gillens recently contributed $100,000 in additional support for the fund, which is overseen by Pasī Janne, MD, PhD, director of the Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology. “This gift catalyzes pivotal research that includes refining targeted therapies to overcome drug resistance,” says Janne, who also leads the Robert and Renée Beller Center for Applied Cancer Science. “Additionally, we are evaluating novel genomic strategies to treat lung cancer, analyzing data to better understand the disease, and continuing to investigate ways to mobilize the immune system to attack tumors.”

That is encouraging, says Gillen, a longtime advocate of the Institute. Currently co-chair of the Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology Visiting Committee, Bill also takes part in many Institute and Jimmy Fund events with Lynne throughout the year. “We share our time and resources with the Institute community because we believe Dana-Farber is the best place with the best people determined to create a cancer-free future.”

Former patient pays it forward by giving back to Dana-Farber

Ten years after her diagnosis of a rare “myxoid and round cell” liposarcoma, an anonymous donor has made a generous $100,000 gift to give back to the doctors and staff at Dana-Farber she credits with saving her life.

“This is my way of thanking the people who showed me such kindness,” said the donor. “I give to ensure that others have the opportunity to receive the same care if they need it, and to make sure Dana-Farber has the resources to increase their reach.”

Her gift will support the research of George Demetri, MD, director of the Sarcoma Center and senior vice president for experimental therapeutics at Dana-Farber. “Our Sarcoma Center has been pivotal in virtually all new FDA-approved treatments for sarcomas over the past 20 years,” said Demetri, who is also the Quick Family Chair in Medical Oncology at Dana-Farber. “The next few years will be critical in bringing even more new precision treatments to patients, and the generosity of philanthropy such as this helps our team make advances possible.”

With a continual stream of translational science and clinical trials, the Sarcoma Center exemplifies Dana-Farber’s bench-to-bedside approach and remains at the forefront of developing advanced therapies, diagnostic tools, and techniques that reduce recurrence and improve patient outcomes.

“When you give to Dana-Farber, you are directly and positively impacting people’s lives,” said the donor. “I’m proud to be able to pay it forward.”

Give support, get support with OOFOS footwear

Now through April 30, 2020, OOFOS, the official recovery shoe of Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund, will donate 3 percent of every purchase from oofos.com to OOFOS Project Pink for Breast Cancer Research, benefiting Dana-Farber. The program was inspired by former OOFOS Brand Leader and Marketing Director Duncan Finigan, who was diagnosed with stage IV metastatic breast cancer in 2014. When Duncan shared her diagnosis with OOFOS, the company used its line of footwear to make strides in the fight against breast cancer.

OOFOS footwear is designed to be worn after a tough workout, or even just a long day on your feet. The product line uses unique OOfoam™ technology to absorb 37 percent more impact than traditional foam footwear, reducing stress on feet and joints. Sadly, Duncan passed away in May 2019, but not before OOFOS’ impact-absorbing technology began having an impact on breast cancer research. Since its launch, Project Pink has contributed over $130,000 to the Breast Oncology Program at the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers at Dana-Farber.

“When Duncan first told me about her cancer diagnosis, I knew immediately that our ‘social cause’ had found us,” said Lou Panaccione, OOFOS co-founder and CEO. “Our mission, ‘to make you feel better,’ now extends to finding a cure for breast cancer. Each dollar that we raise will go towards invaluable research to help those living with breast cancer feel better.”

Jimmy’s Team

Jimmy’s Team is a group of loyal Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber supporters who arrange to make monthly donations. This allows Dana-Farber to plan for the future, fund groundbreaking research, and provide the highest level of patient care.

To join Jimmy’s Team, visit Dana-Farber.org/JimmysTeam or contact Ashley Armstrong at 617-632-5172 or Ashley_Armstrong@dfci.harvard.edu.
10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber's research mission

Get involved, have fun, and beat cancer – visit JimmyFund.org

Dinner with Friends furthers decades of support

The Friends of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute celebrated their annual Dinner with Friends event June 1 at Boston's Hotel Commonwealth, raising a record $510,000 for Dana-Farber's mission.

The dinner was hosted by renowned chef Jeremy Sewall, of Island Creek Oyster Bar and Row 34, for the third year in a row. The sold-out event featured delicious food, inventive cocktails, and cooking demonstrations by Chef Sewall and some of Boston's most acclaimed chefs, including Karen Akunowicz of Fox & the Knife; Alex Crabb of Asta; Tiffany Faison of Foo's Errand, Sweet Cheeks Q; and Tiger Mama; Nicole Hobson of Island Creek Oyster Bar; Andy Husbands of The Smoke Shop; William Kovel of Catalyst Restaurant; Ming Tsai of Blue Dragon; and Dana-Farber's own executive chef, Kim Lambrechts. Dana-Farber patients Carol Chauoui and Jen Cunningham Butler, a Friends Executive Board member, were honored at the event and shared their stories in a moving video demonstrating the Friends’ impact.

Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, thanked the Friends for their continued support of the Institute, which spans more than four decades.

“The dedication and generosity of the Friends is crucial to Dana-Farber’s mission,” Glimcher said. “By supporting initiatives that enhance the Institute’s healing environment, the Friends enrich research, care, and support programs for our patients and their families.”

“We love celebrating the ‘Power of Friends’ with chef Jeremy,” said Dawn Beizaire, program director of the Friends. “Together we enjoy delicious food, fun company, and the opportunity to support research and patient care at the Institute. Chef Jeremy has helped us raise more than $1.3 million in three years through this event, all of which is distributed by the Friends to incredible programs here at Dana-Farber.”

The Friends of Dana-Farber have raised more than $35 million since their founding in 1976. Their support reaches across the Institute, from patient assistance funds, to equipment to benefit multiple laboratories and research teams, to support for an oncology fellow.

Optimizing immunotherapy to treat melanoma

Francis Kittredge Jr., MD, JD, and his wife, Adele, recently committed an additional $500,000 to the Francis and Adele Kittredge Family Immuno-Oncology and Melanoma Research Fund, which has supported innovative studies under the direction of Patrick Ott, MD, PhD, clinical director of the Center for Immuno-Oncology and the Melanoma Center at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

“Scientific discovery is moving faster than ever before, and we are continually uncovering new information about genetics and the immune system that is changing the way we think about treatments,” said Ott. “Philanthropic support enables us to keep up the pace and pursue research that will help us create new, more effective immuno-therapy options for patients.” The funds from Dr. and Mrs. Kittredge will help Dana-Farber researchers explore combination therapies for resistant and/or metastatic melanomas and analyze the clinical benefits of vaccines and immunotherapies, which may have implications for other cancers as well.

“When I was diagnosed with melanoma in 2011 there were very few treatment options available,” said Dr. Kittredge. “The number of new FDA approvals Dana-Farber researchers have helped spearhead in just eight years is amazing, and I look forward to following the tremendous progress they will continue to make in the field of oncology.”

The generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Kittredge will also help the Melanoma Center team pioneer research in checkpoint inhibitors, a form of immunotherapy that enables the immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells.

“The incredible research conducted by Dr. Ott and his team has led us to discover a whole new way to treat challenging cancers, including melanoma, that once proved to be stubbornly resistant to traditional therapies,” said F. Stephen Hodi, MD, director of both the Center for Immuno-Oncology and the Melanoma Center, and the Sharon Crowley Martin Chair in Melanoma at Dana-Farber. “The philanthropic foresight of donors like Dr. and Mrs. Kittredge will help us continue to increase survival rates and, one day, make melanoma a chronic disease.”

AACR multifaceted support enables early career investigators

In a competitive and challenging funding landscape, awards from the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) provide critical resources for early career researchers. In 2018, three Dana-Farber investigators received grants totaling $610,000, to support and sustain discoveries in translational medicine.

Birgit Knoechel, MD, PhD, received the AACR-The Mark Foundation NextGen Grant for Transformative Cancer Research, the organization’s flagship funding initiative to stimulate highly innovative and paradigm-shifting science. Knoechel is using sequencing technologies to investigate the role of rare, drug-tolerant “penetrate” cells and epigenetic heterogeneity in treatment responses for acute T-cell lymphoblastic leukemia, a major contemporary challenge in cancer research. The AACR awards are also funding several joint efforts to enable cancer science and help establish successful career paths. One is the AACR- AstraZeneca Lung Cancer Research Fellowship, awarded to Sushil Kumar, PhD, who is investigating the role of epigenetic modulators of T-cell dysfunction in lung cancers. For Kumar, the fellowship comes as encouragement to continue his research and gain scientific independence.

Lillian Guenther, MD, has a passion for investigation of novel targeted therapies that is evident in her AACR-funded research. She is using different types of genomic screens to develop new drugs for patients with Ewing sarcoma that is metastatic or relapsed with poor outcomes. She received the QuadW Foundation-AACR Fellowship for Clinical/Translational Sarcoma Research. Guenther also cites AACR resources, such as opportunities for mentorship and training, as incredibly valuable in addition to her grant. “The AACR is proud to partner with Dana-Farber researchers to advance important and innovative cancer research while providing access to educational tools and training resources that will set them up for success in their careers,” said Senior Director of Scientific Review and Grants Administration Yixian (John) Zhang, PhD. “The cures to cancer will be found through research. And it is through novel, foundational work conducted by researchers like those at Dana-Farber that we can accelerate the spread of new knowledge about cancer.”

AACR NextGen Grant supports Birgit Knoechel, MD, PhD.

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Trustee Howard Cox invests in precision immuno-oncology

A venture capitalist by profession, Dana-Farber Trustee Howard Cox sees the value in providing early stage funding for entrepreneurial endeavors. So, when Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, president and CEO of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, expressed a need for funding in the Center for Precision Immuno-Oncology (CPIO), Cox immediately came forward with a $400,000 gift. “As Trustees, it’s important that we step up and invest in key Institute initiatives,” said Cox. “The CPIO has demonstrated cutting-edge clinical and research advances that will have an enormous impact on the future of cancer medicine.”

In conjunction with the Profile initiative—one of the world’s most comprehensive genomic databases—the CPIO aims to customize treatments that engage the body’s own immune system to recognize and fight cancer cells, focusing on identifying combination therapies and biomarkers to predict response, resistance, and toxicities. The CPIO strives to develop an ImmunoProfile based on each patient’s immune system, guiding more effective and durable outcomes for patients.

Cox’s new investment provides key support in the CPIO’s next step: single cell analyses, a new technology critical in understanding cancer biology. “Armed with the genetic tumor Profiles and the new ImmunoProfiles, Dana-Farber will be the first to offer comprehensive data on mutations both in the genome and the immune system,” said Glimcher. “Howard’s support enables us to provide patients and their doctors with a roadmap of their cancer and how best to treat it.”

Cocozzas’ gift will ease burden for pediatric families facing treatment

Mark and Susan Cocozza, longtime supporters of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, generously established the Mark & Susan Cocozza Family Fund for the Pediatric Resource Program at Dana-Farber with a gift of $100,000. Dana-Farber’s Pediatric Resource Program supports families experiencing financial hardship while their child is in treatment.

The Cocozzas have been dedicated supporters of Dana-Farber for decades, when they were moved by the brain cancer diagnosis of Susan’s colleague. Seeing the effect that the experience had on the entire family, Mark and Susan vowed to help patient families.

“We are committed to helping children and their families affected by cancer,” Mark said. “We hope our gift to the Pediatric Resource Program will bring some comfort and relief to families that are burdened with hidden costs associated with the desire to be with their children during treatments.” Many patients at Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic receive a course of treatment that lasts at least a year, causing many families to experience a reduction in income due to long-term work absences and/or out-of-pocket expenses, according to Joe Chabot, MS, director of the Pediatric Resource Program.

“Support from the Cocozza fund will allow us to provide direct and immediate support to our patient families in need, helping them to focus on their child’s health and not financial worries,” Chabot said.

Fenway Fantasy Day hits a home run for the Jimmy Fund

On June 1, John Hancock Fenway Fantasy Day returned to Fenway Park, fulfilling the baseball dreams of some of the biggest fans of the Boston Red Sox and the Jimmy Fund. Companies and individuals gave to the Jimmy Fund for their chance to bat and field at the oldest ballpark in America, raising more than $300,000 for this year’s event and nearing $8.5 million raised since its inaugural year in 1992. Corporate teams, such as the event’s presenting sponsor, John Hancock, could purchase batting and fielding packages, and donors could sponsor a patient to take part.

“The energy at Fenway Fantasy Day is just amazing,” said Chloe Hall, a former patient at Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic and 2019 Fantasy Day participant. “It brings a little bit of light to a time in their lives that might be a little bit dark.” Hall was one of 12 Dana-Farber patients who got a chance to step on the Fenway field, with the help of more than 800 generous donors.
A generous gift from the Barbara W. Gomez Trust established an endowed fellowship under the direction of Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD.

“Progress against lung cancer depends upon sustainable support for pioneering research and promising investigators. My family is pleased to help provide the dedicated resources needed to advance this important work.”

— MARIELLE GOMEZ-KAIFER

Barbara Wilson Gomez Endowed Fellowship provides potent catalyst for progress against lung cancer

After losing her mother, Barbara, a nonsmoker, to non-small cell lung cancer, Marielle Gomez-Kaifer was determined to help transform the fight against this disease. A chemist, Gomez-Kaifer knew the value of a catalyst—a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction—in driving physical transformations. When considering where a philanthropic investment in memory of her mother would make the greatest impact, she decided upon a catalytic purpose: to support an endowed fellowship that advances groundbreaking lung cancer research while developing the next generation of leaders in this field.

Thus inspired, Gomez-Kaifer recently helped enable a $1 million gift from the Barbara W. Gomez Trust to establish the Barbara Wilson Gomez Endowed Fellowship in Thoracic Oncology at Dana-Farber. This visionary investment provides funding in perpetuity for a clinical research fellow under the direction of Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD, director of the Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology and director of the Robert and Renée Beller Center for Applied Cancer Science.

The potential impact of this gift is significant and multifaceted. On the one hand, it equips promising early career physician-scientists with the seed funding needed to pursue creative but unproven projects—which are typically not eligible for federal grants—while building track records as independent investigators. At the same time, according to Jänne, the fellowship will bolster his lab team and expand the scope of their research. “We deeply appreciate Marielle’s generosity, which will allow us to attract the best talent from around the world and explore exciting new avenues of research that might not otherwise be possible.” For example, recent projects pursued by fellows under his direction include novel investigations to characterize rare HER2 mutations in non-small cell lung cancer, analyze and overcome drug resistance in EGFR mutated lung cancers, and advance new targeted therapies and combination treatments, among others.

During her own postdoctoral training, Gomez-Kaifer appreciated the freedom her fellowship afforded her to conduct innovative chemistry research that matched her interests. Additionally, from her professional experience as a chemist and in working with her mother on prior philanthropic gifts, she knew the frustration of when a fellow was no longer available to a given lab because temporary funding for a current-use fellowship was interrupted or expired. These considerations, along with what she learned about Dana-Farber’s world-class lung cancer program, led her to establish her family’s fellowship at the Institute as an endowed fund that will continue year after year. “Progress against lung cancer depends upon sustainable support for pioneering research and promising investigators,” said Gomez-Kaifer. “My family is pleased to help provide the dedicated resources needed to advance this important work.”

Cancer interception programs strengthened by Donaldson Charitable Trust

Preventive medicine is key to Dana-Farber’s mission of creating a world without cancer. Through the Center for Cancer Genetics and Prevention (CCGP), Dana-Farber researchers are pioneers in cancer prevention and screening efforts.

Inspired by the reputation and scope of Dana-Farber’s prevention programs, the Oliver S. and Jennie R. Donaldson Charitable Trust recently selected Sapna Syngal, MD, MPH, and Irene Ghobrial, MD, as recipients of two grants totaling nearly $250,000. Syngal, the CCGP’s director of research, heads up two cutting-edge registries of patients within the CCGP that track patients and their families with inherited pancreatic, colon, and endometrial cancer syndromes for long-term study. Ghobrial, CPOF co-principal investigator and director of the Michele & Steven Kirsch Laboratory, is leading a similar effort into tracking the hereditary markers of blood cancers such as acute myeloid leukemia and multiple myeloma.

“We’re thrilled to fund such a robust and well-regarded prevention program.”

— PRISCILLA MELAMPY, Donaldson Charitable Trust

“People come from all over the world to be treated at Dana-Farber,” said Priscilla Melampy, co-trustee of the Donaldson Charitable Trust. “We’re thrilled to fund such a robust and well-regarded prevention program.”

Strengthened by the trust’s funding, Ghobrial’s and Syngal’s studies will guide further research into identifying precursor conditions and the biomarkers of disease progression, with the goal of developing new therapeutic agents to prevent cancer before it occurs.

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I
n May, guests gathered at the Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston for an evening of music, dining, and hope at the 12th annual Music Heals the Soul gala, benefiting the Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies and Healthy Living at Dana-Farber. The event featured a live performance by two-time Tony Award winner Christine Ebersole and Billy Stritch and was emceed by former WCVR-TV reporter and breast cancer survivor Kelley Tuthill.

Boston restaurateur and chef Jody Adams was the guest of honor, recognized for her unwavering dedication to Dana-Farber and the Zakim Center. She became an advocate for patients and their families when her sister Eliza was battling breast cancer. Although Eliza passed away in 2007, Adams credits integrative therapies as playing a vital role in her sister’s quality of life.

This year, Music Heals the Soul raised $250,000 for the Zakim Center, which provides integrative therapies such as acupuncture, meditation, massage, yoga, and Reiki to help ease cancer-related symptoms and enhance the quality of life for patients. It also offers educational programs and conducts integrative oncology research. Joyce Zakim, whose husband, Leonard P. Zakim, passed away in 1999 from multiple myeloma, thanked attendees for supporting his dream for the center.

“Thanks to all of you,” said Zakim, “the Zakim Center’s ever-expanding calendar of classes and healthy living programs are making a difference in quality of life for our growing community of patients.”

Music Heals the Soul helps fine tune integrative cancer care

E
lle Colacray is no stranger to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. When her husband, Ray, was unexpectedly diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer in 2017, there was never a question of where to seek treatment. “We chose Dana-Farber because of our previous experience here,” said Ellie. “Our daughter received the best care, and there was no doubt that it was going to be Dana-Farber again.” Her daughter, Marianne, is a breast cancer survivor who was treated at Dana-Farber 12 years ago.

Michael Rabin, MD, oversaw Ray’s treatment, and Ellie credits him and his team with extending and improving the quality of Ray’s life over the course of two years. Caring and thoughtful, Rabin developed a lasting relationship with the Colacray family, and upon Ray’s passing, Ellie was inspired to make a $100,000 gift establishing the Colacray Family Fund for Lung Cancer Research to support Rabin’s work.

Rabin was “truly delighted that Ellie Colacray chose to honor Ray’s care with a gift to lung cancer research. Generous gifts like hers allow us to promote original research projects and have led to many important discoveries,” he said. Ellie was also moved to name a gene in Dana-Farber’s Gene Display in honor of her daughter. “Absolutely nothing can surpass Dana-Farber,” she said. “It is an institution of the highest level of care and compassion.”

Wife and friend of 70 years honors her husband by funding lung cancer research

Tom

Thomas Roberts, PhD, honored with Casty Family Achievement in Mentoring Award

Thomas Roberts, PhD, co-chair of the cancer biology department at Dana-Farber, received the Casty Family Achievement in Mentoring Award at a celebration in June, marking that the honor was a highlight of his career. Ron Casty and his late wife, Ronni, endowed the award in 2012 to provide ongoing recognition of the importance of mentorship and its role in developing and retaining top-notch faculty at Dana-Farber.

During the ceremony, Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, and Chief Scientific Officer Barrett Rollins, MD, PhD, praised Roberts’ dedication to teaching the next generation of cancer researchers. “A continued focus and investment in mentoring is essential to keeping Dana-Farber at the forefront of cancer research,” said Rollins.

Above, at the celebration (from left): Rollins, Glimcher, Roberts, and Ron Casty.

Cambia Health Foundation invests in network of researchers to transform care

Cambia Health Foundation is committed to making the health care journey more person-focused and economically sustainable from birth to the natural completion of life. Sojourns®, the foundation’s signature program, promotes palliative care to help people with serious illness and their caregivers live well. Grants through the Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program help to cultivate the next generation of palliative care leaders.

“We are excited to support the development of emerging palliative care leaders,” said Peggy Maguire, president and board chair. “These palliative care professionals demonstrate that care is better when we focus on what matters to people instead of on what’s the matter with them. We hope their leadership will influence compassionate, person-focused care throughout the system.”

Building on a longstanding relationship with Dana-Farber, Cambia Health Foundation recently selected Charlotta Lindvall, MD, PhD, as one of its 2018 Sojourns Scholars. With a two-year, $180,000 grant, Lindvall is combining the power of the latest computer science capabilities with clinical palliative care to improve the lives of people living with serious illness and to inform quality improvement initiatives.

“Clinicians’ notes are an invaluable source of knowledge about patients’ values, wishes, and goals of care,” said Lindvall, “but because they are stored as free text in the medical record, they can’t be analyzed using statistical analysis software.”

With colleagues at MIT, Lindvall developed an artificial intelligence program that can extract an analyzable dataset from 241 notes in 26 seconds—with the same accuracy as a 20-hour manual review.

Now Lindvall is leading a team of Sojourns Scholars to expand this platform across their institutions, building a dynamic system that can be widely used to radically change the way patient care is delivered.

“The community of Sojourns Scholars makes this work possible,” said Lindvall. “I’m thrilled to be a part of it.”

Ellie Colacray is funding lung cancer research at Dana-Farber in memory of her husband, Ray.
Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation drives the future of cancer science

DAMON RUNYON CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

By fueling the work of young researchers, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation is investing in the future, propelling bold ideas that could lead to powerful breakthroughs in cancer science. Traditional federal funding supports established projects, not high-risk, high-reward studies that have the potential to transform the field. By filling this gap, Damon Runyon ensures that the nation’s brightest young investigators can pursue the most promising avenues of research, wherever those paths might lead.

Since its founding in 1946, the foundation has awarded nearly $375 million to support investigations into all forms of cancer. Continuing this legacy, over the past year, Damon Runyon made grants totaling more than $2.3 million to seven Dana-Farber investigators who received grants totaling more than $2.3 million from the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation.

Mancias, MD, PhD; Sarah Olsen, PhD; Eric Fischer, PhD; Lillian Guenther, MD; Whitney Johnson, PhD; Joseph Mancias, MD, PhD; Sarah Olsen, PhD; and Harshabad Singh, MBBS

These projects range in scope, demonstrating the foundation’s commitment to tackling cancer from every angle, with the ultimate goal of revolutionizing how we treat and diagnose all forms of the disease. For example, through laboratory studies, Durbin is developing ways to use chemical inhibitors, degraders, and genetic techniques to treat neuroblastoma. Guenther aims to pinpoint the drivers of Ewing sarcoma—an aggressive bone tumor in children and young adults—so that researchers can develop therapies to disrupt these genes’ activity. Johnson is studying how to exploit the innate instability in cancer genomes to halt the growth of pancreatic cancer. Mancias is studying the interaction between radiation therapy and immunotherapy and how to identify better combinations of these therapies to treat pancreatic cancer.

Since not all mutations can be targeted, Fischer is developing degrader drugs that work by destroying, rather than disabling, cancer driving proteins; his studies could impact all cancers with “undruggable” mutations.

Olsen is also examining the concept of degrader drugs by studying the consequences of protein degradation in acute myeloid leukemia, an aggressive pediatric cancer. Finally, Singh is exploring how esophageal adenocarcinomas develop from a non-cancerous condition known as Barrett’s esophagus, which could someday help scientists develop effective preventive or treatment measures.

“We are thrilled to support these exceptional early career scientists at Dana-Farber. Our funding enables them to pursue high-risk, high-reward research in important areas of cancer research. These scientists are the next leaders of their fields, and we are confident that their research will ultimately make a difference for cancer patients,” remarked Yung S. Lie, PhD, president and chief executive officer of Damon Runyon.

Taste the Cure: record-breaking fundraising for breast cancer

The fourth annual Taste the Cure event in March raised $120,000 for Dana-Farber, surpassing all previous fundraising totals for the event. Featuring wine tasting, a silent auction, and a local sponsor support, the fundraiser has grown into a popular social affair for the Glastonbury, Conn., community.

The inspiration and powerhouse planner behind the event is Sandy Cassanelli, a metastatic breast cancer patient at Dana-Farber. After an initial early stage breast cancer diagnosis and a successful treatment plan that rendered her cancer-free in 2013, Cassanelli received news in 2015 that she had developed metastatic breast cancer. As she processed the news, Cassanelli turned to her family, friends, and community for comfort and motivation. She established the Breast Friends Fund that supports metastatic breast cancer research led by Eric Winer, MD, chief of the Division of Breast Oncology in the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers at Dana-Farber. All proceeds from Taste the Cure support research in the breast cancer program.

“Taste the Cure is a way for me to own my cancer journey, feel empowered, and have fun,” said Cassanelli. “Surpassing our fundraising goal and connecting with my community to support Dr. Winer’s metastatic breast cancer research is very rewarding and provides great hope.”

“The funding generated by Taste the Cure helps further critical metastatic breast cancer research,” said Winer, who is also the Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research at Dana-Farber. “Sandy’s strength and dedication are inspiring.”

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Catalane and Whalen strive to improve the patient experience

Bart Catalane and his wife, Kate Whalen, know how challenging a cancer diagnosis is. When Catalane was diagnosed with stage III esophageal cancer, he was inundated with questions, data, and decisions. Fortunately, Catalane’s brother, a surgeon, and his employer, GLG, quickly connected him with top doctors, helpful resources, and, importantly, fellow esophageal cancer patients.

After careful study, Catalane sought treatment from Peter Enzinger, MD, director of the Center for Esophageal and Gastric Cancer (CEGC) at Dana-Farber and Raphael Bueno, MD, chief of the Division of Thoracic Surgery at Brigham & Women’s Hospital. Following a complete esophagectomy, Catalane found his connections with other patients, both months and years ahead of him in treatment, to be essential.

“These people are living proof of where I hope to be. They speak candidly to all aspects of how to adapt to life after surgery and the treatment that follows,” says Catalane. “These positive personal connections have led to a less fearful and stressful life and I would like other patients and their families to benefit from these relationships.”

To this end, Catalane and Whalen made a substantial gift to create the CEGC Family Patient Navigator Fund, with the hope that additional funding is secured to hire the first-ever patient navigator in the CEGC.

“This person will be solely dedicated to guiding our patients through difficult decisions, coordinating appointments, and fostering patient connections,” says Enzinger. “Bart and Kate’s dedication to the patients and caregivers that come after them is truly inspiring.”

TeamConnor supports novel pediatric trial

The Dallas-based TeamConnor Childhood Cancer Foundation has awarded Dana-Farber’s Steven DuBois, MD, MS, a generous grant of $100,000 to help fuel his team’s clinical trial of a new type of cancer treatment.

The work of DuBois, director of pediatric experimental therapeutics at Dana-Farber, and his team focuses on converting the latest scientific advances into newer, more effective cancer treatment methods. The grant will help fund DuBois’ first-in-child trial of the drug ALRN-6924, based on a stapled peptide made in the lab of Dana-Farber chemist Loren Walensky, MD, PhD. Together, the team is working to determine if this drug can be a successful treatment for a range of childhood cancers, including Ewing sarcoma, leukemia, and neuroblastoma.

“The support of the TeamConnor Childhood Cancer Foundation helps my team move forward with our research into ALRN-6924, specifically testing the best ways to use this drug in children with relapsed solid tumors and leukemia,” said DuBois. “We hope the trial will ultimately result in more treatment options for our pediatric patients.”

TeamConnor Childhood Cancer Foundation was founded in 2008 in honor of Connor Cruse. Connor was diagnosed with stage IV neuroblastoma at the age of four and fought an incredibly tough battle against his disease until he passed away in 2009. The foundation continues Connor's fight by raising money to help fund childhood cancer research so that other children don’t have to go through the same battle Connor did.

Lung Cancer Research Foundation inspires progress in targeted therapeutics

In a recent study, Cañadas and Chiara Ambrogio, PhD, to fuel their work in targeted therapeutics for lung cancer.

In a recent study, Cañadas and Chiara Ambrogio, PhD, identified a group of genetic elements known as endogenous retroviruses (ERVs) that contribute to the formation of tumors but can also make cancer cells vulnerable to immunotherapy. With funding from LCRF, Cañadas will build on his previous work to study the biology behind drug-resistant lung cancer cells’ connection to the activation of ERVs, which will be crucial in developing new therapeutic strategies that enhance response to immunotherapy.

Ambrogio was awarded the prestigious Scientific Merit Award, presented to the investigator whose proposal was selected for outstanding overall merit by LCRF’s Scientific Advisory Board. Her research concerns KRAS-targeted therapies, specifically working to improve the efficacy of drug development for use against KRAS-driven lung cancer that might benefit from specific treatments.

“I am honored to be receiving the Scientific Merit Award from the Lung Cancer Research Foundation,” said Ambrogio. “This is not only a personal achievement, it is a recognition that inspires me and my entire team in our mission to develop new therapeutic strategies against lung cancer.”

“The number of applications we receive continues to grow year after year, demonstrating the critical need for funding this kind of impactful lung cancer research,” said Brendon Stiles, MD, chair of LCRF’s board of directors.

“We are delighted to support the work of these two exceptional scientists and are confident that their projects will help lead the way toward significant advancements and improved patient outcomes.”
A family that fundraises together, stays together

When 16-year-old Ginny Barrett’s mother was diagnosed with myxoid liposarcoma, Ginny knew she needed to take action. This was her mother’s second cancer diagnosis, having lived with multiple myeloma for the past few years. And so earlier this year, Ginny threw a fundraiser at her school, during which she and six of her friends shaved their heads, raising over $27,000 for pediatric cancer research. Ginny met with the administration of her school and got permission for the fundraiser before telling her parents. “I was surprised when Ginny told us she was about to shave her long blonde hair,” said Diana Barrett, Ginny’s mother. “But not at all surprised that she wanted to do something to help others.” Ginny was worried her parents might not want her to shave, but of course they were proud of her.

In fact, moved by their daughter’s altruism, Red and Diana Barrett created a fundraiser of their own for Dana-Farber to run alongside Ginny’s—Red even shaved his own head with Ginny on the day of her event. All told, the Barrett family has raised more than $100,000 for cancer research, with a significant portion allocated to Dana-Farber’s sarcoma research under the direction of Andrew Wagner, MD, PhD.

“It started with Ginny. Our daughter motivated us to get involved and use our story to help raise money to support cancer research,” said Diana. “Our hope is that these funds help drive the research that benefits so many people in their fight against cancer.”

Richardson’s research ‘rocks on’ with help from patient

When your oncologist is known in the field as the “rock star of multiple myeloma doctors,” it’s not hard to get behind his research. That’s part of what drew Cindy Harris to seek treatment from Dana-Farber’s Paul Richardson, MD—and what motivated her and her husband, Jeff, to make a $100,000 gift to establish the Cynthia Coulter Harris Family Fund to support his work. Harris was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in January 2017, and her local oncologist soon referred her to Richardson, clinical program leader and director of clinical research at Dana-Farber’s Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center, and R.J. Coman Professor of Medicine. Harris’ doctor, who trained under Richardson, refers to him as “the fifth Beatle” for the leading role he has played in advancing treatment for the rare blood cancer.

“I am so grateful for the folks who have devoted their lives’ work to such an aggressive form of cancer,” Harris says. “The progress that has been made has been remarkable.”

10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission
Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer invests in the next generation

Fueled by a two-year, $200,000 fellowship from the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC), Dana-Farber’s David Liu, MD, MPH, MS, is evaluating the biological underpinnings of melanoma patient responses to immunotherapy, delving deep into the mechanisms that drive response to inform next-generation drug development.

Since its inception, SITC has been committed to advancing the fields of immunology and immunotherapy to help make these treatments a standard of care for patients. While immunotherapy continues to evolve, current therapies that target immune checkpoints are not viable options for all patients—many respond poorly or develop resistance to the drugs.

“We know that patients respond to PD-1 and CTLA-4 inhibitors at different points in the immune system, but the biomarkers, or mechanisms, of the poor responses are unknown,” said Liu. As the SITC-Bristol-Myers Squibb Postdoctoral Cancer Immunotherapy Translational Fellow, Liu will use his background as a computational biologist to uncover why some patients respond poorly through a large-scale analysis of patient data. Understanding the biological underpinnings of patient response may reveal future combination treatments for patients who previously could not be treated with immunotherapy.

“This fellowship award is part of SITC’s commitment to invest in the next generation of leaders and innovators in immunology and immunotherapy,” said SITC President Mario Sznol, MD. “Dr. Liu’s project is a promising approach to discover predictive biomarkers of response and potential mechanisms of resistance, which we hope will produce new targets for immunotherapy and ultimately improve patient outcomes.”

Legacy gift brings a life full circle

In the 1960s, 12-year-old Bruce Bornstein was given only months to live after a diagnosis of bone cancer. Following an experimental treatment in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic, Bruce beat the odds and lived for five more decades, always with a zest for life.

“Bruce is the model for the kind of life an adult survivor of childhood cancer can live,” said Joe Bornstein, Bruce’s brother. “He had a great life, always surrounded by friends and family who loved him dearly.”

Before passing away in May 2018, Bruce left a $100,000 gift in his will to support Dana-Farber’s Pediatric Resource Program (PRP), which provides direct financial support to help families in treatment with expenses related to their child’s care, such as transportation, lodging, food, and living expenses.

The program carries special significance for the Bornstein family, who with limited financial means needed to travel to Boston from Portland, Maine, for Bruce’s treatment.

“My parents were lucky that they could stay with family during Bruce’s treatment. Not everyone can,” said Deborah Bergeron, Bruce’s sister. “When Bruce passed, we thought about what other families would need. And they need to be with their children.”

“Last year alone, we provided assistance to over 300 families,” said Joe Chabot, MS, director of the Pediatric Resource Program. “Bruce’s gift ensures we can ease cancer’s financial burden for many more.”

Loyal supporters celebrated at President’s Circle Appreciation Night

The 13th annual President’s Circle Appreciation Night took place in April at the Champion’s Club at Fenway Park, where members were treated to a reception before watching the Boston Red Sox play the Detroit Tigers. Joe Castiglione, WEEI Red Sox Radio Network broadcaster, spoke about the Red Sox’s longstanding relationship with Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund, and thanked attendees for their support of the Institute’s research and care. The annual event, co-hosted by Stephen E. Sallan, MD, chief of staff emeritus and the Quick Family Chair in Pediatric Oncology at Dana-Farber, and Richard Stone, MD, chief of staff, recognizes President’s Circle members and President’s Circle Corporate Leaders for their ongoing and generous giving to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Above (from left), event speakers Stephen Sallan, MD, Joe Castiglione, and Richard Stone, MD, at the Champion’s Club.
Fans rally against cancer on Red Sox Opening Day

Rally Against Cancer™ presented by Chowdaheadz started off baseball season when students and employees rallied on Fenway Opening Day, April 9. The Boston Red Sox played the Toronto Blue Jays at the city’s beloved Fenway Park, and Rally teams at workplaces and schools raised more than $500,000 for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, marking the program’s 14th year.

Students from All Saints Academy in Webster, Mass., the top Rally Against Cancer fundraising school, visited Fenway Park in May for a special meet-and-greet with Red Sox catcher Sandy Lein. Staff members Ellen Tagg and Marilyn Berthaume, along with their “Jimmy Fund Club,” led the charge against cancer. This season, All Saints Academy raised $6,674 for cancer care and research at Dana-Farber. This was their third year participating in the program, with a cumulative total of $13,772.

“The true meaning of the Club’s efforts was seen during Penny Wars when we heard the students pouring money into their jars saying, ‘We’re doing it. Our money is going to find a cure for cancer!’” said Ellen Tagg. All Saints Academy is one of more than 200 schools and companies in six states that are part of Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund’s Rally Against Cancer. By donating $10 or more, students and employees can start or join a Rally team. On Fenway Opening Day each year, teams wear Red Sox gear to support their beloved Boston team while rallying against cancer.

Prizes for top-fundraising teams and individuals range from signed memorabilia to Boston Red Sox player visits like the All Saints Academy’s with Lein. In 2019, the top workplace fundraising team was Country Bank, which raised $27,712.

As a new venture in 2019, Rally Against Cancer featured a Rally Day for football fans, on Sept. 6, NFL Season Opener Weekend.

Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance takes aim at this challenging disease

Compared to the progress made in the treatment of other cancers, ovarian cancer continues to be a difficult disease to detect and combat. For many decades, and until quite recently, there were few new treatments available and mortality rates still remain quite high. Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) is on a quest to shift this paradigm and put an end to ovarian cancer. OCRA is the largest private funder of ovarian cancer research and the organization’s 360-degree approach includes research, advocacy, patient programs, and education for healthcare providers and patients.

“For far too long there have been limited options to treat ovarian cancer,” said Sarah DeFeo, vice president, Scientific Affairs & Programs at OCRA. “Part of our strategy to fight this disease includes funding the best, most innovative research. We are delighted to be partnering with Dana-Farber investigators to unravel some of the mysteries around ovarian cancer and pave the way toward new treatments.”

— SARAH DEFEO, vice president, Scientific Affairs & Programs, Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance

One such investigator, Elizabeth Stover, MD, PhD, received a Liz Tilberts Early Career Award from OCRA. This award, named for OCRA’s late president, is a three-year grant totaling $450,000 for early career faculty who demonstrate a strong commitment to ovarian cancer research. Stover is studying why ovarian cancer cells become resistant to chemotherapy and exploring new ideas for treatment, including the use of drugs that block specific proteins that are protecting cancer cells.

“Most ovarian cancer patients ultimately develop chemotherapy-resistant disease that is difficult to treat and has a poor prognosis,” said Stover. “With this award from OCRA, I can build upon my previous research that identified which genes affect cancer cell survival after treatment. I am honored to receive this multi-year support, and hopeful that this research can lead to better outcomes.”

OCRA is also supporting Isaac Klein, MD, PhD, who received an Ann and Sol Schreiber Mentored Investigator Award. Klein aims to understand how normal cells transform into ovarian cancer cells and reveal the genes that maintain the oncogenic state in this disease.
NOW–MAY
Kick for Dana-Farber
Score big with your soccer team by raising funds to support Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission. Participating teams are entered to win an on-field Rally Tunnel experience at a New England Revolution home game as well as other great prizes. Visit KickForDanaFarber.org or contact Jonathan Clark at 617–632–5381 or KickforDanaFarber@dfci.harvard.edu.

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute &
The Jimmy Fund
dana-farber.org and jimmyfund.org
THANKING THOSE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In July, patients in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic enjoyed a visit with members of the New England Revolution. We are grateful to the Revolution for its support of Kick for Dana-Farber presented by We Got Soccer, a fundraising program that gives youth soccer players the opportunity to raise vital funds for cancer research and patient care at the Institute. Clockwise, from lower left: Revolution players Wilfried Zahibo, Brad Knighton, and Michael Mancienne with Jimmy Fund Clinic patient Tyler Satchell.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
For more information on all Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber events and programs, go to JimmyFund.org or Dana-Farber.org

NOW–JANUARY
Dana-Farber Holiday Cards & Gifts
Presented by Amica Insurance
Embrace a holiday tradition that’s full of hope. Purchase cards and gifts to spread cheer while making a difference in the fight against cancer. View the complete collection and order online at DanaFarberHoliday.org or shop at these participating retailers: Stop & Shop, Long’s Jewelers, The Crafty Yankee, Trazazz, The Christmas Dove, and the Friends’ Corner Gift Shop at Dana-Farber.

JANUARY 24
Chefs for Jimmy
Sample fare from Western New England’s finest chefs at Chez Josef in Agawam, Mass., at the 30th annual Chefs for Jimmy benefiting Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund. For tickets or to learn more contact Jillian Davis at 617–632–5091 or Jillian_Davis@dfci.harvard.edu.

JANUARY 25
PMC Winter Cycle
The PMC Winter Cycle at Fenway Park is a vital “spoke in the wheel” of PMC fundraising. Join this spinning event that sends 100% of all rider-raised dollars directly to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Save the date: Registration opens October 10! Learn more at WinterCycle.org.

NOW–DECEMBER
Holiday Patient Assistance Program
Brighten the holidays for patients in financial need. Your contribution helps to put a holiday meal on the table, buy gas to visit family, or purchase gifts for loved ones. Visit JimmyFund.org/HolidayGiving or contact Hannah McCoy at 617–632–6247 or Holiday_Assistance@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–APRIL
Cheer for Dana-Farber®
Empower cheerleading squads to conquer cancer through fundraising. Top fundraising squads win the chance to perform prior to a New England Patriots pre-season game or participate in a cheer clinic with New England Patriots Cheerleaders. Visit CheerForDanaFarber.org or contact Sarah Eldredge at 617–582–8387 or SarahE_Eldredge@dfci.harvard.edu.

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ALL WINTER
Jimmy Fund Golf
Presented by: Mohogan Sun
Organize a golf or mini-golf tournament and enjoy a sport you love while supporting groundbreaking research and compassionate patient care at Dana-Farber. Start planning your spring, summer, or fall tournaments now! Visit JimmyFundGolf.org or contact Josh Belowich at 617–632–6609 or Joshua_Belowich@dfci.harvard.edu.