The Rossy Foundation makes largest investment in liposarcoma research in Dana-Farber history

A recent $10 million commitment by The Rossy Foundation to establish the David Liposarcoma Research Initiative aims to bring hope to liposarcoma patients worldwide. This five-year initiative will support groundbreaking research into liposarcoma at Dana-Farber and partner institutions to revolutionize treatment of this rare, underfunded, and understudied disease. This investment represents The Rossy Foundation’s largest commitment to Dana-Farber and the most support dedicated to liposarcoma in the Institute’s history. The Rossy Foundation and KBF CANADA have partnered to fund the first phase of the initiative, thanks to the generosity of The Rossy Foundation.

Cancers known as sarcomas develop from stem cells and connective tissues such as muscle, fat, and bone that hold the body together. Since sarcomas are rare—they account for about 1% of cancers in adults—investment in liposarcoma research has been limited. Recent improvements in technology and an increasing number of available patient samples have led to a growing molecular understanding of liposarcoma and point to new targets for therapy, and this support will push this research forward.

This initiative will focus on collaborations among several departments at Dana-Farber and be led by George Demetri, MD, director of the Sarcoma Center, senior vice president for Experimental Therapeutics, and Quick Family Chair in Medical Oncology at Dana-Farber. He and his colleagues are leading a broad spectrum of studies to better understand this disease, unleash the immune system against it, overcome drug resistance, and advance novel therapies.

“The visionary and forward-looking support from The Rossy Foundation will greatly enhance our understanding of the underlying biology, genomics, epigenetics, immunologic and mechanistic characteristics of liposarcomas,” said Demetri. “It is our hope that the new research collaborations made possible by this gift will ultimately lead to better therapeutic options for patients diagnosed with this rare disease.”

“We appreciate The Rossy Foundation’s very generous commitment, as well as their recognition of the strength of Dana-Farber’s exceptional portfolio of basic science and clinical research programs to mobilize our world-class Sarcoma Center,” said Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD.

The David Liposarcoma Research Initiative brings together teams of 11 principal investigators from four institutions—Dana-Farber, Harvard Medical School, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard—to collaborate within the cycle of discovery, validation, and clinical testing. Dana-Farber will be the lead and coordinating institution.

“The Rossy Foundation is proud to make this meaningful contribution toward better treatments for liposarcoma, which affects more than 4,000 patients in the United States and Canada every year,” said Gregory J. David, vice-chair of The Rossy Foundation. “The David Liposarcoma Research Initiative, under the direction of Dr. George Demetri, will drive breakthroughs that not only transform the landscape of liposarcoma research, but most importantly help extend and enhance the lives of patients across the globe.”

This initiative will be overseen by an international Scientific Advisory Board. In October 2022, The David Liposarcoma Research Initiative International Scientific Symposium in basic, translational, and clinical liposarcoma research will convene as an opportunity for the team to share results, guide the development of clinical trials in years three through five, and stimulate new partnerships in this field.

The Rossy Foundation, based in New York, is a philanthropic organization that supports The Dana-Farber Campaign, advancing epigenetics, reducing disparities, nurturing our nurses, giving grassroots, supporting survivors.

The Rossy Foundation makes largest investment in liposarcoma research in Dana-Farber history
Dear Friends,

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and in a special section of this issue of Impact, I am thrilled to highlight recent gifts to The Dana-Farber Campaign that advance research and programs in a variety of pediatric cancers and related priorities such as epigenetics, long-term survivorship, and patient assistance.

Generous philanthropic support makes all the difference in the world for our youngest patients and their families, and helps the Institute maintain its position as a national and world leader in cancer science and medicine. Over the summer, we were ranked #2 in the nation for pediatric cancer by U.S. News & World Report, #4 for adult cancer programs, and we remain the top-ranked cancer hospital in New England for the 21st consecutive year.

For over seven decades, our community’s generous support for the many Jimmy Fund events has provided critical funds to improve outcomes for our patients of all ages. As we move into the fall and the end of our fiscal year, we look forward to continuing to provide fun and safe ways for you and your family to get involved anytime, anywhere. All of us at Dana-Farber have been deeply moved by the tremendous impact of your collective generosity—from grassroots fundraising to transformational gifts and grants, we are grateful to each and every one of you for supporting our mission. Thanks to you, we are making progress toward The Dana-Farber Campaign’s $2 billion goal. As you read about the impact of philanthropy in the following pages, I hope that you share the feelings of gratitude, inspiration, and confidence in our ability to achieve our ambitious goals in service to our patients and their families.

With my warmest regards,

Melany N. Duval
Senior Vice President and Chief Philanthropy Officer

THE DANA-FARBER CAMPAIGN: UPDATE

Dana-Farber is pursuing an ambitious, multi-year fundraising effort to change the future of cancer research and care: The Dana-Farber Campaign. This $2 billion campaign is the largest in the Institute’s history and one of the largest ever in the U.S. focused solely on cancer. Our community of support is crucial to this effort. Philanthropy through The Dana-Farber Campaign will accelerate the Institute’s strategic priorities by supporting revolutionary science, extraordinary care, exceptional expertise, and essential opportunities—helping us prevent, treat, and Defy Cancer.

Pediatric cancers are a key initiative in The Dana-Farber Campaign. As demonstrated by the special section in this issue for National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, gifts to pediatric cancers through the campaign will accelerate progress across the broad spectrum of scientific research and patient care. Campaign funds in support of our pediatric initiatives make a critical difference by advancing cancer prevention and early detection, expanding treatment options and precision medicine, reducing treatment side effects for our youngest patients and adolescents, and improving our understanding of the rarest pediatric cancers.

To learn more, visit DefyCancer.org

Melлен and Eisenson Family pledges $3 million in support of The Dana-Farber Campaign

For Institute Trustee Michael Eisenson, convincing people that Dana-Farber is a worthy place to invest time and resources comes easily. As Chair of The Dana-Farber Campaign, he is quick to spread the word to friends and loved ones, including his cousin Neil Mellen.

Responding to the opportunity, the Mellen and Eisenson Family made a generous gift of more than $3 million to bolster The Dana-Farber Campaign, with a significant portion of the gift supporting the newly launched Center for BRCA and Related Genes—a program area where Neil and Michael felt they could make the biggest impact on several aims of the campaign.

“In speaking with senior leadership, we learned that we are in the very early innings of promising work to understand the genetic bases of many types of cancers, and in using that understanding to create earlier diagnostics and more effective approaches to therapy,” said Michael. “This center, which appears to be so far unique in the U.S., seemed like a particularly high-impact opportunity to us.”

The center is of particular significance to Neil and Michael, who both lost close family members to cancer at young ages. Michael’s mother passed away in her 40s, and Neil’s daughter in her 50s. Their gift establishes the Nancy Ann Mellen Fund for Research and Clinical Trial Support, as well as The Mellen and Eisenson Family endowed fund that will provide ongoing support for this program in perpetuity. The funds will be managed under the direction of

Panos Konstantinopoulos, MD, PhD, director of translational research in Gynecologic Oncology, and Judy Garber, MD, MPH, chief of the Division of Cancer Genetics and Prevention and the Susan F. Smith Chair at Dana-Farber. Konstantinopoulos and Garber serve with Dipanjan Chowdhury, PhD, as co-directors of the BRCA Center. The gift also includes a significant investment in early career researchers through the David Livingston Early Career Investigator Awards, in honor of Michael’s close friend David Livingston, MD, who has built a legacy of mentoring early career physician-scientists at Dana-Farber over the course of 50 years.

Under Garber’s direction, these awards will support select, early career investigators pursuing promising projects within the center’s areas of focus that have the potential for high-impact clinical applications.

“For both Michael and me, the quality of the people at Dana-Farber was the key to our decision about where to invest,” said Neil.

As a committed Trustee for many years, Michael also pledged unrestricted support through the Trustee Annual Fund, which provides flexible funds to support the greatest needs across the Institute; and for the Presidential Initiatives Fund, which allows President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, to direct funds to promising high-risk, high-reward studies that hold great potential for discovery.

Michael’s commitment to inspiring others to become involved with Dana-Farber’s mission is further reflected by the portion of this gift being given through the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC), the nation’s largest athletic fundraiser that draws participants from all over the country and solely supports Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund. The PMC is Dana-Farber’s largest single contributor, accounting for 64% of the Jimmy Fund’s annual revenue.

“This generous commitment from the Mellen and Eisenson Family brings us that much closer to achieving the ambitious goals of The Dana-Farber Campaign,” said Glimcher. “I am grateful for the trust they have placed in our ongoing work to understand, prevent, and treat BRCA cancers. Their generosity will help us improve the lives of patients for years to come.”

Panos Konstantinopoulos, MD, PhD, director of translational research in Gynecologic Oncology, and Judy Garber, MD, MPH, chief of the Division of Cancer Genetics and Prevention and the Susan F. Smith Chair at Dana-Farber. Konstantinopoulos and Garber serve with Dipanjan Chowdhury, PhD, as co-directors of the BRCA Center.
Trustee Alice Cutler provides more than $1 million to drive progress across Dana-Farber

Institute Trustee Alice Cutler and her late husband, Stephen, have been devoted members of the Dana-Farber community for decades. Through annual and major giving, Alice’s volunteer work and service on the Presidential Visiting Committees (now known as the Presidential Symposium), Board of Trustees, and the Friends of Dana-Farber, the Cutlers have been deeply involved in many of the Institute’s most important programs. Now, with an incredible commitment of $1,007,500, Alice Cutler is helping to accelerate several key priorities of The Dana-Farber Campaign, including cancer prevention and early detection research led by Matthew Freedman, MD; research under the direction of Bruce Johnson, MD; the Presidental Initiatives Fund under the direction of President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD; and the cancer prevention efforts in Community Health led by Magnolia Contreras, MSW, MBA. Additionally, a portion of Cutler’s gift will support Volunteer Services under the direction of Senior Manager Patricia Stahl, MD—a function Cutler holds dear as a volunteer through the Friends of Dana-Farber for 25 years.

Cutler first came to the Institute to accompany her father through his treatment for lung cancer. She recalls the compassion of his doctors, especially at a time when lung cancer was and still is stigmatized, and was impressed by the work that people like Bruce Johnson, MD, did to destigmatize the disease. That compassion inspired a lifetime commitment from Cutler.

Over the years, Cutler has developed a passion for research into early detection, which she feels is the next step in eradicating cancer.

“Years ago, when I first joined the Friends, I went to an event and there was a woman there holding a baby on her shoulder. I remember the event speaker pointed to the baby and said, ‘When that baby grows up, this will be called the Dana-Farber Institute,’” said Cutler, pointedly removing the word “cancer” from the name. “We aren’t quite there yet, but I believe focusing on prevention and early detection will get us there.”

“We’ve made significant strides over the years in developing non-invasive methods to detect cancer at its earliest stages, but we still have far to go,” said Freedman. “Visionary funding like the Cutler gift accelerates our ability to create sensitive and accurate screening tools that will have a profound impact on eliminating cancer.”

Ever forward-thinking, in addition to her volunteer work and membership on various Board committees, Cutler is also member of the Dana-Farber Society, a group of visionary donors who secure future funding for cancer research and patient care with gifts through their estate plans.

“I’ve been fortunate to know Alice for a number of years, and I can say without a doubt that her loyal support, and that of the late Steve Cutler, to the Office of Clinical Trials has made a difference in the lives of our patients,” said Bruce Johnson, MD. “I’m grateful to have Alice’s continued faith in my work, and the work of my colleagues.”

PMC Winter Cycle powers into Spring Edition

A delay from its customary January date due to continuing pandemic restrictions in 2021 did nothing to slow the momentum of the PMC Winter Cycle, the high-energy stationary cycling event that kicks off fundraising for the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) each year. In quite the change of pace, for the first time ever the PMC Winter Cycle was held on the field at Fenway Park in June, during a heat wave.

In another incredible first, the Winter Cycle: Spring Edition exceeded an astounding $2 million in fundraising for the PMC, 100% of which goes directly to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund. The PMC is the largest single athletic fundraiser in the nation and Dana-Farber’s largest single contributor, accounting for 64% of the Jimmy Fund’s annual revenue.

This year’s unique Winter Cycle drew more than 400 riders participating both in person at Fenway and virtually from home, through six 45-minute sessions led by top spinning instructors from The Handle Bar, EverybodyFights, Turnstyle Cycle, CycleBar Wellesley, and B/SPoke.

Agenus partners with Dana-Farber to tackle glioblastoma

Agenus is accustomed to taking on big challenges in the field of cancer medicine. The company is dedicated to discovering and developing immuno-oncology products that help a patient’s own immune system identify and target cancer cells. They have seen promising clinical program results with their therapies, with many other potentially beneficial therapies advancing in their pipeline. Recently, Agenus has partnered with Dana-Farber’s David Reardon, MD, clinical director of the Center for Neuro-Oncology, to further advance the study of their immunotherapies.

This partnership will allow Reardon and his colleagues to study combinations of Agenus’ immunotherapies, including its next-generation anti-CTLA-4 AGEN1181 and its anti-PD-1 baltimab, in one of the most difficult-to-treat brain cancers: glioblastoma. Like Agenus, Dana-Farber believes strongly in the power of immunotherapies and their ability to benefit patients by harnessing and boosting the body’s own biological defense system—so much so, that immunotherapy is a core focus of The Dana-Farber Campaign. Agenus’s hope is that investing in Reardon’s innovative research through access to its therapies and funding will help expedite immuno-oncology advances against this particular form of cancer and provide better, more long-term options for patients.

“Agenus strives to expand the benefit of innovative immuno-oncology solutions to all cancer patients, including those suffering from cancer types with limited treatment options,” said Antoine Tanne, PhD, associate director of immunoeeducation at Agenus. “We are proud to partner with Dr. Reardon and Dana-Farber to make progress in delivering novel therapies that have the potential to improve clinical outcomes for patients facing this aggressive brain cancer.”

Agenus is a biopharmaceutical company committed to discovering and developing immuno-oncology products to treat glioblastoma.
Impact treatments currently available. Beroukhim’s research gliomas often survive, they can experience serious prognosis and need new treatments to improve with high-grade gliomas often have a very difficult brain tumors occurring in childhood. Children to examine the drivers of gliomas, the most common $1.5 million to lead an international collaboration Rameen Beroukhim, MD, PhD, a grant of more than an in-store gift at the register or round for the Jimmy Fund through Stop & Shop’s “Help Cure Childhood Cancer” campaign, raising an incredible $2.5 million to propel pediatric brain cancer research. The charity has two ambitious goals: double the most incredible part of the human body—the To help achieve these goals and speed up progress against brain cancers globally, The Brain Tumour Charity funds highly innovative and promising neuro-oncology research. The Brain Tumour Charity recently awarded Rameen Beroukhim, MD, PhD, a grant of more than $1.5 million to lead an international collaboration to examine the drivers of gliomas, the most common brain tumors occurring in childhood. Children with high-grade gliomas often have a very difficult prognosis and need new treatments to improve outcomes. And while children with low-grade gliomas often survive, they can experience serious side effects from the disease as well as from the treatments currently available. Beroukhim’s research

The Brain Tumour Charity gives more than $1.5 million to propel pediatric brain cancer research

Based in the United Kingdom, The Brain Tumour Charity supports research on what they describe as the most incredible part of the human body—the brain. The charity has two ambitious goals: double survival from brain tumors in the U.K. in the next 10 years and halve the harm brain tumors have on quality of life within five years. To help achieve these goals and speed up progress against brain cancers globally, The Brain Tumour Charity funds highly innovative and promising neuro-oncology research. The Brain Tumour Charity recently awarded Rameen Beroukhim, MD, PhD, a grant of more than $1.5 million to lead an international collaboration to examine the drivers of gliomas, the most common brain tumors occurring in childhood. Children with high-grade gliomas often have a very difficult prognosis and need new treatments to improve outcomes. And while children with low-grade gliomas often survive, they can experience serious side effects from the disease as well as from the treatments currently available. Beroukhim’s research

The Brain Tumour Charity gives more than $1.5 million to propel pediatric brain cancer research

After 30 years of partnership, there is no stopping the generosity of Stop & Shop

When Stop & Shop opened its first stores more than 100 years ago, the world was vastly different. Few homes had ice boxes, stores only sold fresh produce and dry goods, and outcomes for pediatric cancer patients were grim. Today, just as technology has changed the face of grocery shopping, it has also improved cancer treatment. Some of this progress can be attributed to the generosity of Stop & Shop and its customers. The grocery chain has partnered with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund since 1991, raising more than $81 million for pediatric cancer research.

Continuing this tradition, in February and March, customers in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island showed their support for the Jimmy Fund through Stop & Shop’s “Help Cure Childhood Cancer” campaign, raising an incredible $2.5 million. Shoppers were asked to make an in-store gift at the register or round up their purchase to the next whole dollar amount at self-checkout, with the difference going to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund. Customers could also donate online when placing an order for pickup or delivery.

“Our customers and associates’ generosity and participation in the ‘Help Cure Childhood Cancer’ campaign is unmatched year after year,” says Stop & Shop President, Gordon Reid. “We are proud of our long-standing partnership with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund and praise their continued commitment to make a difference in the lives of children affected by cancer.”

The “Help Cure Childhood Cancer” campaign is promoted through in-store signage highlighting pediatric patients being treated in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic. This year’s ambassadors were 4-year-old Addison and 3-year-old Daylight. Addison loves to “help” her care team fight her tumor, assisting her nurses in any way she can. When she first started chemotherapy for optic pathway glioma, staff gave Addison an IV, tape, and test tubes for her stuffed animals, so she wouldn’t be going through treatment alone. When not at the clinic, Addison enjoys coloring, playing with stickers, and eating chocolates.

Daylight, described by her family as a “threenager,” loves to listen to music, dance, dress up, and get her nails done. Daylight’s mother, Kesora, praises Daylight’s care team at the clinic, where Daylight is being treated for leukemia. “They are all amazing. They take the time not only to make sure my daughter is comfortable, but also to check on my entire family. I am so grateful.” While Daylight is still too young to understand the important role Stop & Shop has played in her cancer treatment, she’ll never pass up her favorite snacks from the grocery chain: potato chips, cheese, and strawberry milk.

The “Help Cure Childhood Cancer” campaign allows us to join forces with many of the top leaders in the world across varied scientific disciplines to develop new drugs to target transcription factors and combat gliomas,” said Beroukhim. “This work could ultimately make an enormous difference by improving outcomes for young patients with these brain tumors, for whom new and better treatments are desperately needed.”

Pediatric cancer is a key focus of The Dana-Farber Campaigns, the Institute’s multi-year fundraising effort which aims to accelerate its strategic priorities by supporting revolutionary science, extraordinary care, and exceptional expertise.

“This award to Dr. Rameen Beroukhim is an example of The Brain Tumour Charity funding world-class researchers and connecting global experts to accelerate the discovery of new treatments,” said David Jenkinson, PhD, chief scientific officer and interim CEO, The Brain Tumour Charity. “Together with the team at Dana-Farber, we’re improving our understanding of brain tumours and advancing faster towards a cure.”

“Together with the team at Dana-Farber, we’re improving our understanding of brain tumours and advancing faster towards a cure.”

— DAVID JENKINSON, PHD, chief scientific officer and interim CEO of The Brain Tumour Charity
The Freddie Fund spurs progress, and hope, for neuroblastoma research

Freddie Page has always been a happy little boy. He loves playing with trucks and buses, he loves his family—and his family loves him dearly.

In June 2020, the Page Family received devastating news. At just 18 months old, Freddie had a tumor that turned out to be stage IV neuroblastoma, and he would need to undergo months of treatment at Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic. Thankfully, Freddie is doing well now, and his family reports that he is happy and back to playing with buses and trucks. But for the Pages, the work is not over—the family established the Freddie Fund to support neuroblastoma research at Dana-Farber, wanting to ensure better outcomes for the next family facing this disease.

Neuroblastoma is a type of cancer in which tumor cells grow in immature nerve cells called neuroblasts, and therefore affects infants and young children—most commonly children under the age of 5. As the Pages learned, approximately 10% of children with high-risk neuroblastoma do not respond to initial treatment, and 40–50% will experience relapse.

“We wanted to make sure that we could help improve the chances for kids everywhere to get treatment,” said Katherine Page, Freddie’s mother. “With the success rate of other types of cancers, the potential is there. It’s a case of time and funding. We’re very hopeful that they’ll get there for neuroblastoma as well.”

Thanks to advances in treatment, greater numbers of children with neuroblastoma are living longer than ever before. The Freddie Fund, managed under the direction of Suzanne Shusterman, MD, an international expert in neuroblastoma and one of Freddie’s doctors at Dana-Farber, will further these advances by supporting an innovative clinical trial being led by Susanne Baumeister, MD, for patients with relapsed or treatment-resistant neuroblastoma. Shusterman, Baumeister, and their colleagues discovered that the ALK protein is expressed on a large number of neuroblastomas—which makes ALK a promising target for treatment.

“Thanks to support from the Freddie Fund, we are ready to test a new CAR T-cell therapy that specifically targets ALK,” said Shusterman. “CAR T-cell therapy has shown tremendous promise in treating other forms of cancer, and we are thrilled to be moving forward on an approach that could benefit so many of our youngest patients facing this disease.”

“This is all for the next family, the next kid, the next community going through this. We want them that much closer to a positive outcome,” said Sam Page, Freddie’s father.

Hyundai Hope On Wheels grant helps fund promising pediatric brain cancer research

Hyundai Hope On Wheels’ (HHOW), a nonprofit organization funded by Hyundai Motor America and its U.S. dealers, is committed to raising awareness and funding critical pediatric cancer research. Since 1998, Hyundai Hope On Wheels has awarded more than 1,000 pediatric cancer research grants totaling $185 million.

In 2020, Hyundai Hope On Wheels awarded Manelli Filbin, MD, PhD, a $300,000 grant through its Hyundai Scholar Hope Grant program. The grant is supporting Filbin, who is research co-director of the Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Program at Dana-Farber, and her investigation into diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas (DIPGs), the most lethal form of pediatric brain cancer. DIPGs are not accessible via surgery and are resistant to both radiation and chemotherapy. Filbin’s team is using the grant to study a promising new therapy that targets DIPG cells by forcing them into more mature stages of development.

“Through our competitive grant programs, Hyundai Hope On Wheels is dedicated to funding the most promising translational research that will help improve outcomes for children battling cancer,” said Kevin Reilly, board member of Hyundai Hope On Wheels, Hyundai National Dealer Council chairman, and owner and president of Alexandria Hyundai. “We are encouraged by the research being led by Dr. Filbin and commend her and the entire staff at Dana-Farber for their tireless work.”

“The Hyundai Scholar Hope Grant will propel my team’s study of DIPG cells, and hopefully advance the field of cancer research,” said Filbin. “We are grateful for their impactful commitment to changing the trajectory of pediatric brain cancer.”

Abraham Family continues support in son’s memory

Andrea Abraham became a member of the extended Dana-Farber Cancer Institute family in 1977, when her infant son David was diagnosed with neuroblastoma and treated at the Institute’s Jimmy Fund Clinic. Although David sadly passed away at just 17 months old, Andrea’s Dana-Farber family has only grown since then, thanks to the David Abraham Fellowship Fund, which the family started in David’s memory in 1977 to advance the careers of promising childhood cancer researchers. Andrea recently renewed support of the fund with a generous $250,000 gift.

“Even though David’s outcome wasn’t successful, the care he received, and that we received as a family, was spectacular,” says Andrea. “Today, there is much more success than there was 40 years ago, but diseases like neuroblastoma are still really hard. I hope that this fellowship will go on for years to come and will continue helping young researchers to advance their work and help other families.”

In addition to the family fellowship, which was one of the first of its kind at Dana-Farber, Andrea joined the Board of Trustees in 1989 and recently became a member of the Dana-Farber Society, adding her support to The Dana-Farber Campaign in myriad ways. She has also passed along the tradition of supporting Dana-Farber to her children, who meet regularly—now virtually—with the David Abraham Fellows and Lisa Diller, MD, vice chair of Pediatric Oncology at Dana-Farber, who oversees the fellowship, to learn about their progress.
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute is familiar territory to the Gross-Lohs. For many years, David and Christine Gross-Loh have philanthropically supported innovative lung cancer research at the Institute. But in 2018, when their son Daniel was diagnosed with leukemia, they learned firsthand what it means to be a Dana-Farber patient.

David and Christine spent months on the pediatric floor while their son was undergoing treatment. While there, the Gross-Lohs recall getting to know many of the other families and realizing how disruptive illness can be—not just the cancer itself, but the emotional and financial toll it can take.

It was this experience that inspired their latest gift to support the Pediatric Resource Program at Dana-Farber.

“Prayers From Maria is familiar territory to the Gross-Lohs. For many years, David and Christine Gross-Loh have philanthropically supported innovative lung cancer research at the Institute. But in 2018, when their son Daniel was diagnosed with leukemia, they learned firsthand what it means to be a Dana-Farber patient.

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Under the leadership of Joe Chabot, the Pediatric Resource Program helps to alleviate financial hardships that can directly affect a patient’s care. Assistance may come in the form of gift cards for gas, transportation, or food, so that families can travel for treatment and have meals during long hospital stays. Resource specialists are also available to advocate for patients and families and connect them to external resources including state and federal assistance programs, community programs, and private agencies, as well as local, regional, and national foundations that provide support.

As one patient family shared, “We weren’t used to seeking financial assistance and wouldn’t have known where to start looking. We consider this program’s help, and the way it was offered, just about perfect in these very challenging times.”

Research conducted by Dana-Farber investigators suggests that material hardship can directly affect patient outcomes, making the work of the Pediatric Resource Program a critical component of our signature Total Patient Care model, a strategic priority of The Dana-Farber Campaign.

“We’ve always been incredibly appreciative of the quality of care, and the compassion of the care, at Dana-Farber,” said the Gross-Lohs. “For us, giving to the areas where the mission resonates is important, and this program to support families during this tough process, particularly during COVID-19, really resonated with us. If we could help lift some of the burden, that would be great.”

Prayers From Maria pursues cures for pediatric gliomas

The Prayers From Maria Foundation fuels investigations into the causes, prevention, treatments, and cure of gliomas, a devastating type of childhood brain tumor. Ed and Megan McNamara, Prayers From Maria’s founders, know all too well the challenges for families facing a glioma diagnosis. The foundation is named in honor of their daughter, who passed away in 2007 from a diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma.

They also know the difficulties faced by doctors trying to treat this disease, and the lack of funding that hampers the critical research needed to cure it. That’s why the Prayers From Maria Foundation has made a generous $500,000 grant to support the work of Mimi Bandopadhayay, MBBS, PhD, and her team at Dana-Farber and collaborators. This award, the Abby Streszoff Memorial Collaboration Award Grant, is named after the daughter of the foundation’s Family Liaison Laurie Streszoff. Abby died of a brain tumor at age 6.

“At Prayers From Maria we are very serious about where our funding goes,” says Megan McNamara. “We desire to advance the state of research for children with deadly brain tumors. Our support of initiatives at Dana-Farber have proven to do just that. We are very pleased to support Dr. Bandopadhayay (Mimi) and her team on this project, and grateful to see a true desire to help these children at the very heart of what they do.”

Gliomas develop within the central nervous system and do not have clear boundaries, making them difficult to treat and prone to relapse. The last decade has seen an explosion in genomic studies dedicated to uncovering the genetic drivers of pediatric gliomas, but the promise of precision treatment remains elusive.

Bandopadhayay, a specialist in pediatric neuro-oncology, has assembled a collaborative team with investigators across the U.S., Germany, and U.K. with complementary expertise in pediatric gliomas, genomics, and clinical trials. Their objective is to develop precision medicine-based trials for children with gliomas.

“Maria and Abby join thousands of children around the world who have been devastated by a diagnosis of a childhood brain tumor,” says Bandopadhayay. “Our goal is to work as hard as we can to change this story for all children and families touched by pediatric brain tumors.”

The Imagine Display

The Imagine Display, made possible by the Lucchino Family, is a living museum of hope, resilience, and humanity. Imagine: a Future without Cancer. Add your name, or that of a loved one, to The Imagine Display, made possible by the Lucchino Family. Make a contribution that supports Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission and choose an element in the periodic table, a star in the sky, a Boston landmark, or much more.

To learn more about The Imagine Display and one-of-a-kind naming options, visit ImagineDisplay.org
The Ambrose Monell Foundation advances immuno-oncology research for our youngest patients

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute has a long history of important discoveries about the immune system. In fact, the Institute’s late president, Baruj Benacerraf, MD, was a Nobel Laureate whose scientific discoveries transformed our basic understanding of how the body fights disease—laying the groundwork for today’s immunotherapy treatments for cancer and other diseases. With support from The Ambrose Monell Foundation over the past several years, Dana-Farber researchers have moved the field of immunotherapy forward to better match patients with the treatment most appropriate to their cancer. Now, with a renewed commitment of $1.5 million from the foundation, Dana-Farber scientists can capitalize on the momentum of their work and extend the impact of immunotherapy to the youngest, most vulnerable patients worldwide.

Immunotherapies trigger the body’s own immune system to detect and attack cancer cells. For 25% of cancer patients overall, these treatments have been lifesaving. But for the remaining 75%, they simply do not work. Dana-Farber is dedicated to changing this by developing new strategies within immuno-oncology, including researching how immunotherapies can be used to treat pediatric patients. This commitment from Dana-Farber is so significant that immunotherapy is a key priority of The Dana-Farber Campaign, the Institute’s multi-year, comprehensive fundraising effort. Leveraging this new support from The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Dana-Farber will direct its efforts to bring the promise of immunotherapy to bear on pediatric cancers. Led by the Department of Pediatric Oncology and the Center for Precision Immuno-Oncology at Dana-Farber, the team of researchers will utilize this transformational gift to focus its work on determining how a child’s immune system responds to cancer, studying how the immune system recognizes cancer cells, and developing novel approaches for CAR T-cell therapies.

“The generous and continued support of The Ambrose Monell Foundation has provided the team at Dana-Farber the opportunity to greatly advance the field of immunotherapy,” said Laurie H. Gluckman, MD, Dana-Farber president and CEO, the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine, and a world-renowned immunologist. “Now, we can turn the attention of this work to pediatric oncology. With full lives ahead of them, our young patients deserve to have effective treatments that spare them so many of the toxic and late effects of traditional treatments.”

Established in 1956, The Ambrose Monell Foundation has a longstanding commitment to aiding and contributing to scientific, cultural, and other charitable initiatives. “We are proud to continue our partnership with Dana-Farber,” said Ambrose K. Monell, president, director, and treasurer of the foundation. “We are inspired by the dedication the clinicians and researchers have for their patients. Not only are they working to treat their patients in Boston, but they are committed to changing the lives of cancer patients everywhere.”

St. Baldrick’s leads the charge against pediatric cancer

In a world where a child is diagnosed with cancer every two minutes, the St. Baldrick’s Foundation has made it their mission to stop the clock.

As the largest non-government funder of childhood cancer research grants, St. Baldrick’s works closely with leading oncologists to support the most promising pediatric cancer research of the moment, and with a recipient list that spans 379 institutions across 29 countries, they’re poised to create real impact in the field. Recently, St. Baldrick’s awarded $220,000 to Dana-Farber to support innovative research led by Ming-Ru Wu, MD, PhD. Wu’s lab is dedicated to harnessing the power of synthetic biology, bioinformatics, and machine learning to develop effective cancer immunotherapies. His work developing what he terms Tumor Immunotherapy by Gene-circuit Engineered Response (TIGER) aims to rationally program the cancer cells to turn against themselves. This approach has the potential to enhance the therapeutic efficacy and decrease the systemic toxicity of immunotherapy. Wu aims to develop TIGER to effectively treat pediatric high-grade gliomas, resulting in improved therapeutic outcomes that provide new hope for our youngest patients and their families.

“The St. Baldrick’s Foundation is proud to support Dr. Wu’s work and Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission,” said Kathleen Ruddy, chief executive officer at St. Baldrick’s Foundation. “Together, we will find more cures and better treatment options for all childhood cancers so these patients can focus on the most important thing of all: being kids.”

Generous pediatric leukemia funding drives novel research

Dana-Farber’s Yana Pikman, MD, has received a $165,000 grant from the Charles H. Hood Foundation to support her leading work in cancer genomics to develop more targeted, effective therapies for pediatric leukemia patients. She and her colleagues previously conducted the first national, multi-institutional precision medicine trial based on genomics for children with relapsed or high-risk leukemia. Their research proved that this approach can be useful in diagnosing and informing the treatment strategy for individual patients’ disease.

With the Hood Foundation’s partnership, Pikman will lead the group in the next step of the study where they will apply this approach across a regional setting—pediatric centers in the northeastern United States—to analyze the genomics of both newly diagnosed and relapsed patients.

“We are honored to support the important work of Dr. Pikman and team, which we believe will make a meaningful difference for children and families facing this disease,” says Charlene Mancusi, director of the Hood Foundation. Pikman greatly appreciates their investment, saying, “There is no doubt that having a better understanding of the specific mutations present in the leukemia of pediatric patients will help further clarify diagnoses, improve prognostic tools, and inform treatment options.”

Providing momentum to a key strategic priority of The Dana-Farber Campaign, Pikman will help guide the future of pediatric leukemia care as physician-scientists strive to develop and deliver therapies that are more personalized, have greater success rates, and result in fewer long-term side effects for young patients.
In 2017, the Francis Family faced the loss of their beloved Brantley, who passed away at the age of 3 from cancer that began as a germ cell tumor he had at birth. Wanting to give back, the family soon after established the Brantley Francis Foundation to provide hope and healing for other children affected by cancer. Their new gift of $100,000 to Dana-Farber establishes a named fund to honor Brantley while supporting the Malignant Germ Cell International Consortium (MaGIC) under the direction of Lindsay Frazier, MD.

Founded in 2009, MaGIC has brought together the world’s experts in germ cell tumors including those in basic science, epidemiology, pathology, and clinical trial design. MaGIC now draws members from 40 institutions around the world. The Institute’s leadership in global efforts such as this is bolstered by The Dana-Farber, support from the PLGA Fund at the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation (PBTF) has provided critical support for Dana-Farber’s tissue banking efforts through the PBTF David Andrysiak Clinical Research Assistant Award.

Tissue banking—collecting samples of normal and cancerous tissues—provides an invaluable resource that researchers use to study the basic biology of various cancers and better understand why some tumors are vulnerable to certain treatments and resistant to others. This kind of discovery science is a crucial priority of the Institute and of The Dana-Farber Campaign.

Under the direction of Keith Ligon, MD, PhD, director of Patient Derived Models at Dana-Farber, support from the PLGA Fund enhances our ability to connect patients to the latest research, clinical trials, and precision medicine, and fuels national and regional collaborations that accelerate research efforts.

“The Clinical Research Assistant Award has provided a much-needed boost to our program by supporting the personnel that make this work possible,” said Ligon. “Thanks to the foundation’s partnership, we have seen encouraging progress in advancing our precision medicine goals for kids through data and sample collection to support clinical trial enrollment. This sustained effort over many years is crucial to improving treatments for patients.”

“At PBTF, we believe a world without childhood brain tumors is possible. Patient tissue samples are critical in ensuring the research community has the material necessary to test novel therapies. Dr. Ligon’s work is instrumental in achieving this outcome,” said Courtney Davies, president and CEO of PBTF. “We are thrilled to support this important award.”

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In 2007, 2-year-old Liam Witt was diagnosed with cancer—and his parents, Gretchen and Larry, first learned about the needs surrounding childhood cancer. They knew they had to do something to help. Rallying a loyal community of volunteers, Liam’s parents organized a larger-than-life 96,000 cookie bake-a-thon and in the process realized that talking with people about good cookies was an easy way to open a conversation about pediatric cancer. This pivotal moment became a movement, evolving into the nonprofit organization Cookies for Kids’ Cancer. Now comprised of more than 13,000 grassroots fundraising events in all 50 states and 20 countries, Cookies for Kids’ Cancer demonstrates the power of collective action in the fight against this devastating disease.

In the spirit of The Dana-Farber Campaign, Cookies for Kids’ Cancer recently made a $100,000 grant to Rani George, MD, PhD, and her investigations focused on harnessing the power of the immune system against neuroblastoma. Drugs that trigger the immune system to attack tumors—known as immunotherapies—can be highly effective, but cancer cells are often able to evade these treatments over time. In laboratory studies, George identified a mechanism by which the immune system is dampened in some neuroblastoma tumors as well as a potential strategy to reignite this dampened response.

With the support of Cookies for Kids’ Cancer, George will continue to explore her findings in additional research models of high-risk neuroblastoma to lay the groundwork for future studies that may someday benefit patients in the clinic.
Vanessa Johansson inspires investigator and supports synovial sarcoma studies

Vanessa Johansson is a visionary entrepreneur, passionate health care advocate, and patient with synovial sarcoma—a rare and aggressive soft-tissue cancer. Since her initial diagnosis in 2015, she has been unceasing in her exploration of studies into this disease, and found new hope when she encountered the work of Dana-Farber’s Cigall Kadoch, PhD. In Kadoch, Johansson discovered a kindred spirit whose determination to defy cancer matched her own, and whose revolutionary research was the key to creating a brighter future for patients everywhere.

Recently, Johansson made a gift of $1 million to establish the Vanessa Johansson Fund for Synovial Sarcoma Research in support of groundbreaking basic science led by Kadoch, and is raising additional contributions from friends, family, and associates through her Giving Page on the Jimmy Fund website.

Kadoch’s lab studies the structure and function of the BAF complex, a key molecular “machine” which modifies DNA architecture and is frequently mutated in more than 20% of all cancers, including 100% of all synovial sarcomas. By going straight to the source of disease progression, her team’s investigations are yielding foundational biological insights and broadly applicable innovations with a diversity of potential benefits. For example, they recently created the first-ever three-dimensional model of the BAF complex, providing an opportunity to spatially map thousands of cancer-associated mutations within the complex and understand their functions. Advances like this are informing the development of novel treatments—including the first-ever targeted therapy for synovial sarcoma, which, based on Kadoch’s work, is moving from the lab to the clinic in early phase trials imminently.

Johansson is intimately familiar with the desperation for better treatments, having tried numerous therapeutics to no avail, and having heard many heartbreaking accounts of fellow patients who have been similarly devastated by synovial sarcoma. She also recognizes that the story of this underfunded, and therefore devasted by synovial sarcoma.

While Johansson and Kadoch have connected to tackle this specific cancer together, they both know that the latter’s research has far-reaching implications across multiple diseases, and therefore touches everyone in a tangible way. Johansson said: “The scale and impact of Cigall’s work is profound, so I will gladly devote whatever life I have left to ensuring that it keeps moving onward and upward.”

Anonymous donor bolsters critical cancer ethics research

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals across the country were faced with an impossible question: how do you decide who receives lifesaving treatments first, last, or not at all? This scenario is a real-world illustration of medical ethics, an area that members of Dana-Farber’s Ethics Advisory Committee are examining more closely thanks in part to an anonymous donor’s generous support of the Institute’s Cancer Ethics Research Fund. In a widely read study published in JAMA Oncology last year, members of the committee evaluated the impact this scenario may have had specifically on patients with cancer, finding that many U.S. state guidelines allocating scarce resources during the pandemic deprioritized or excluded patients with cancer, regardless of prognosis.

“It’s an ethical issue: excluding patients from access to critical care in crisis situations just because they have cancer does not seem right,” says Gregory Abel, MD, MPH, co-chair of the committee.

The gift to the Cancer Ethics Research Fund will help empower the committee—which also facilitates professional education, reviews institutional policies, and provides clinical ethics consultations to patients and families—to investigate ethical questions related to cancer care. In addition to the COVID-19 resource study, researchers are exploring hot-button oncology topics like medical data privacy, racial disparities in cancer care, generic testing, and telehealth. With additional support, the committee hopes to fund a post-doctoral research fellow dedicated to ethics research.

“An ethics consultation improves care for our patients at Dana-Farber, but through ethics research, we can improve care for patients everywhere,” Abel says. “Support from the fund allows us to grow our research enterprise and help patients across the country.”

Music Heals the Soul returns for Home Edition 2

Music Heals the Soul Home Edition 2, a virtual celebration benefiting the Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies and Healthy Living at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, was held on June 9. Broadway, film, and TV star Erich Bergen, who is a cancer survivor, returned for a spectacular concert with pianist and Worcester native, Michael Orland. The event was hosted by Kelly Turhull, COO of Catholic Charities Boston and breast cancer advocate and survivor. All event proceeds support the Zakim Center’s virtual programming including music and art therapy, mindfulness, nutrition, exercise and scholarship for massage and acupuncture with the focus of healing the mind, body, and soul, during one’s cancer journey.

This year’s Music Heals the Soul Home Edition 2 raised more than $145,000, bringing the cumulative total to $2.7 million since the event began 15 years ago. “I was thrilled to see the incredible support from our donors and the dedication of our outstanding committee members and chairs,” said Joyce Zakim. “The testimonials that Zakim Center patients shared brought home the importance of the center’s many programs, the robust music therapy sessions. Our family appreciates the compassionate and talented staff and practitioners who have provided this care and given so much to their patients and families, especially during this difficult year.”
Terrana gift builds greater access to cancer care

When Institute Trustee Beth Terrana attended her first Dana-Farber event, it sparked her drive to advocate for cancer medicine and initiated her decades-long involvement with Dana-Farber. Since then, her resolve to support the Institute’s mission has only grown. “I was so incredibly impressed by the dedication, passion, and commitment of all the clinicians and researchers I met, that I vowed to help them achieve their goals in any way possible,” said Terrana. Today, she is helping to lead The Dana-Farber Campaign as a member of the Campaign Cabinet. Her recent campaign gift of $500,000 established the Terrana Family Fund for Clinical Access and Patient Navigation to support the Cancer Care Equity Program (CCEP). Under the direction of Christopher Lathan, MD, MPH, chief clinical access and equity officer and faculty director of the CCEP, in collaboration with Magnolia Contreras, vice president, Community Health, this gift will develop and implement a community-facing patient navigation program to increase community access to cancer care.

Patient navigation is a well-established intervention, removing barriers to care through financial assistance, transportation, childcare, and translation services. Navigators are typically from or familiar with the cultural communities of the patients they support—vital for building trust with patients and families. “We want to increase access and broaden our presence,” said Lathan. “It’s important to ensure patients feel they are in the right place—that they can look around, feel comfortable, see others who look like them—because they are in the right place.”

Longtime PMC rider supports immunotherapy for kidney cancer

Maura Shaughnessy has been riding the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) for 28 years. “I love to cycle,” she says. “But the PMC is really about raising money for Dana-Farber and giving people hope.”

That hope has never been more important to Maura than right now. Last October, her brother, Frank, was diagnosed with stage IV kidney cancer. Though Frank lives in California, Maura knew that Dana-Farber had to be part of his care team. “When you look at the number of clinical trials and the cutting-edge research at Dana-Farber for kidney cancer—it’s the place to be,” said Maura.

Recently, Maura and her husband, Bernard Regenauer, made a gift of $500,000 to establish the Frank Shaughnessy Kidney Cancer Research Fund under the direction of Frank’s oncologist, Toni Choueiri, MD, director of Dana-Farber’s Lank Center for Genitourinary Oncology and a dedicated PMC rider. Including this year’s personal commitment, Maura has raised more than $1.9 million through the PMC, which donates 100 percent of every rider-raised dollar to Dana-Farber as its largest single contributor, accounting for 64% of the Jimmy Fund’s annual revenue.

“We hope to pursue research into a promising type of immunotherapy—natural killer cells,” says Choueiri, who is also the Jerome and Nancy Kohlberg Professor of Medicine. “These cells can be altered to have a long-lasting response against tumor cells and could offer hope for a more durable and tolerable treatment for kidney cancer.”

Maura appreciates the importance of research in bringing new therapies to the clinic for patients. In February, Frank was put on a new treatment protocol. The combination therapy had been approved by the FDA only weeks prior and the lead investigator of the clinical trial that secured the FDA approval was Choueiri. In May 2021, Frank’s tumor began responding to treatment and—a cyclist himself—he felt well enough to join Maura for several rides on his e-bike during her visit.

“Whether it’s extending someone’s quality of life or saving someone’s life,” Maura says, “getting people in front of the doctors who are on the cutting edge of research makes all the difference in the world.”

Kure It donates to fuel kidney cancer research

Founded by Barry Hoenen as a deeply personal mission to cure kidney cancer, Kure It Cancer Research quickly transformed into an impactful nonprofit. Hoenen himself faced an 18-year-long battle with kidney cancer before passing away, fueling the organization’s commitment to support research into kidney and other understudied cancers. In keeping with their commitment, Kure It made a generous award of $125,000 to support kidney cancer research under the direction of Sylvan Baca, MD, PhD.

Kidney cancer, or renal cell carcinoma (RCC), causes nearly 15,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Strategies for early detection and identification of novel targets are critical. With this grant from Kure It, Baca seeks to uncover new therapeutic targets to treat non-clear cell kidney cancer, which could transform the care of patients. “We’re delighted to help advance Dana-Farber’s mission to defy cancer through the extensive research of underfunded cancers, including kidney cancer,” said Dave Martinson, executive director of Kure It Cancer Research. “At Kure It, we’re committed to eradicating cancer by building strong relationships with leading cancer centers like Dana-Farber. We look forward to our continued relationship.”

Since 2007, Kure It Cancer Research has raised over $16 million for kidney and other underfunded cancers including a $250,000 grant to Dana-Farber in 2015, in collaboration with the American Association for Cancer Research. Kure It’s grant to advance new treatments and early detection of kidney cancer addresses key strategic priorities of The Dana-Farber Campaign.
Greenthal/Eisenmann Family’s $1 million unrestricted gift is a vote of confidence

“Tremendous thanks to the Beyers.”

— JILL A. GREENTHAL, Dana-Farber Trustee

Like so many people, Greenthal knows the impact of cancer; it struck both her parents, and her mother was treated at Dana-Farber. “Both my Dad and Mom received superb treatment, but for my Mom at Dana-Farber I saw a real fervor to put the patient and their needs at the center,” said Greenthal. “It’s truly a special place to be treated.”

Motivated by her family’s experience with cancer, and in particular by her mother’s treatment at Dana-Farber, in 2015, Greenthal joined the Institute’s Board of Trustees. For her, it is a chance to make an investment in the future, and to do her part to lessen the burden of cancer on individuals, families, and communities all around the world. “It’s ironic that both my parents got cancer, because we had no prior family history,” said Greenthal. “The pervasiveness of this disease is overwhelming, but the opportunity to help change the course of cancer is what drives my involvement with Dana-Farber.”

Donors’ gift advances targeted melanoma therapies

Abby Fierman and Michael Grossman are no strangers to cancer or Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Abby’s grandmother and father both had cancer. After college Abby was hired as a research assistant at Dana-Farber. She worked with a nurse practitioner who inspired her to go to nursing school to become a nurse practitioner.

Then, in 2019 Abby was diagnosed with melanoma. After surgery to remove it, she was referred to Elizabeth Buchbinder, MD, a specialist at Dana-Farber who focuses on immunotherapy and targeted therapies for melanoma. Buchbinder’s compassion and expertise put Abby at ease, and inspired the couple to make a gift to further her work.

“I’m grateful for this generous gift from Abby and Michael. We want to be a part of it,” as an expression of confidence. “The good work that describes her family’s unrestricted gift of $1 million by Hodi’s wealth of knowledge in treatment plan, Beyer was struck conversations about an effective his treatment virtually.

A local doctor and closely monitored everyone safe, Hodi referred Beyer to with two young boys at home. To keep keep and Anthony “Tony” Beyer’s melanoma diagnosis and he was wary of traveling to Boston from his home in Palm Beach, FL., to meet with his Dana-Farber oncologist, F. Stephen Hodi, MD—especially with two young boys at home. To keep everyone safe, Hodi referred Beyer to a local doctor and closely monitored his treatment virtually.

Through their numerous conversations about an effective treatment plan, Beyer was struck by Hodi’s wealth of knowledge in melanoma research. As a result, the generous couple pledged $250,000 to establish the Vanessa and Anthony Beyer Fund for Melanoma Research to drive innovative investigations led by Hodi, who is director of the Melanoma Center and the Center for Immuno-Oncology and the Sharon Crowley Marin Chair in Melanoma at Dana-Farber.

“I am very grateful to Dr. Hodi and my care team at Dana-Farber,” Beyer said. “Dr. Hodi’s pursuit of new and innovative treatments saved my life, and I hope our gift can help him continue his crucial work.”

“The Beyers’ generous gift will enable translational studies leading to clinical investigation that may not be possible otherwise,” Hodi said. “Tremendous thanks to the Beyers.”

The Beyers fund new clinical melanoma investigations

D ana-Farber strives to bring patients the best possible treatment wherever they are, and Anthony “Tony” Beyer and his wife, Vanessa, know this firsthand. COVID-19 came fast on the heels of Tony Beyer’s melanoma diagnosis and he was wary of traveling to Boston from his home in Palm Beach, FL., to meet with his Dana-Farber oncologist, F. Stephen Hodi, MD—especially with two young boys at home. To keep everyone safe, Hodi referred Beyer to a local doctor and closely monitored his treatment virtually.

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Greenthal serves as a member of the Board Finance Committee and this experience has given her firsthand knowledge of how precious unrestricted gifts, like the one she and her family have made, are to the success of a world-class organization like Dana-Farber. These mission-critical funds support Essential Opportunities across the Institute, propelling innovative early stage research, speeding new drugs into clinical trial, enabling Dana-Farber to retain and attract the best researchers, clinicians, and staff, helping to meet unanticipated needs such as those posed by COVID-19, and ensuring patients’ physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs are met. Greenthal also saw an opportunity to make her family’s gift go even further by designating it for a matching challenge, thereby inspiring others to also give to this important cause.

“The impact of Jill and Tom’s gift is truly multifaceted,” said Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, Dana-Farber’s president and CEO and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “Unrestricted funds are vital to extending our scientific and clinical excellence, and they amplify our ability to help patients everywhere. I am grateful for Jill’s service as a Trustee and for the Greenthal/Eisenmann family’s generous support of The Dana-Farber Campaign and our mission to defy cancer.”

10% of all designated gifts support our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission

$1 million unrestricted gift

The Beyers’ gift will support crucial melanoma research at Dana-Farber.

Tony and Vanessa Beyer’s gift will support crucial melanoma research at Dana-Farber.
The powerful legacy of Annie McNamara Evans

Annie McNamara Evans was just 25 years old when she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML). She underwent treatment at Dana-Farber that included two bone marrow transplants and several experimental therapies. During this time, she raised awareness and funds for the Institute—speaking on air at the WEEI/NESN Jimmy Fund Radio-Thon and at the annual Friends of Dana-Farber dinner, for example—using her trademark humor and grace to share her experiences and inspire others facing a similar journey.

Unfortunately, Annie relapsed in 2018, shortly before her wedding to her college sweetheart, Dan Evans, and passed away in November 2019 at the age of 29.

What followed was an outpouring of love on a monumental scale. Nearly every person whom Annie had touched over the course of her life, including doctors and nurses on her care team led by Robert Soiffer, MD, found some way of taking up her cause for Dana-Farber—running the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge and Falmouth Road Race, riding in the Pan-Mass Challenge, holding bake sales, selling knitted hats and scarves, donating to her Jimmy Fund Giving Page, and beyond.

Unfortunately, Annie's battle was too short. Two bone marrow transplants and leukemia (AML). She underwent treatment that had to be managed through treatment, but her family were relieved to learn that there were were still options available, and that they had options should one drug prove ineffective.

Not only was Joann's disease managed through treatment, but her quality of life has remained high—she is still able to spend plenty of time keeping up with her grandchildren. Bob credits the success of Joann's treatment to Dana-Farber's unique dual focus on cancer research and care.

"The work being done here has turned a deadly disease into a chronic, but manageable disease," said Bob. In just the last 18 months, research led by Dana-Farber has resulted in four new drugs being approved by the FDA for multiple myeloma treatment. To further support Richardson's work, Joann and Bob have made a personal gift of $100,000, with the hope that their generosity will not only produce more lifesaving drugs, but will also ensure a high quality of life for all future patients.
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society provides boost to blood cancer research at Dana-Farber

For more than 40 years, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) has supported Dana-Farber’s important research into blood cancers, leading to breakthroughs that have made a difference in the lives of patients and their families. Building on this incredible momentum, LLS recently awarded three Dana-Farber physician-scientists grants totaling nearly $1,150,000, to advance the development of targeted therapies for blood cancers.

Margaret Shipp, MD, chief of the division of Hematologic Neoplasia and the director of the Lymphoma Research Center at Dana-Farber, and co-leader Scott Rodig, MD, PhD, received the Blood Cancer Discovered’s Grant Award to fund their research into further understanding the tumor-immune microenvironment (TIME) of classic Hodgkin lymphoma (cHL). Shipp’s grant was co-funded by The Mark Foundation for Cancer Research and The Paul G. Allen Frontiers Group. Her team is creating a roadmap of TIME-associated immune evasion mechanisms that they are confident will uncover druggable targets for cHL and many other types of blood cancers.

“At present, our understanding of how lymphomas evade immunological recognition and elimination is incomplete. We've identified classic Hodgkin lymphoma as a perfect model system to address this question,” said Shipp, who is also the Douglas S. Miller Chair in Lymphoma at Dana-Farber. “What's more, the proposed TIME roadmap of cHL will provide additional insights and therapeutic strategies for many other hematolymphoid neoplasms and solid tumor.”

Kimberly Stegmaier, MD, co-director of the Pediatric Hematologic Malignancy Program at Dana-Farber, received funding for her research into new therapies for pediatric acute leukemias as part of LLS PeDAL—a global precision medicine master clinical trial that will test multiple targeted therapies simultaneously around the world. As part of this endeavor, Stegmaier and her team aim to identify highly effective, novel targeted therapy combinations for children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and acute myeloid leukemia (AML). These preclinical studies will inform future PeDAL clinical trials.

“Tremendous progress has been made in increasing survival for pediatric ALL in the last few decades, but progress has been slower for AML and certain high-risk subgroups of ALL,” said Stegmaier, who is also the Ted Williams Chair at Dana-Farber.

“This project aims to change that and propel a number of new treatment strategies to help children facing these diseases. I am so grateful to The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's support of this critical research.”

Since 1949, LLS has invested over $1.3 billion in cutting-edge research for leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, and other rare types of blood cancers. With more than $74 million awarded to Dana-Farber in total, the foundation has been an important partner to the Institute over the years, and their latest investment provides a valuable boost to the ambitious goals of The Dana-Farber Campaign.

“LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and we believe the collaboration with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute physicians and researchers will help accelerate the advancement of cures and better patient care for people with blood cancer,” said Lee Greenberger, PhD, LLS chief scientific officer. “We are optimistic that the research LLS is funding through Dana-Farber and other institutions will more rapidly advance innovative blood cancer therapies and save more lives.”

LRF grants propel lymphoma research

The Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) is the country’s largest lymphoma-focused health organization, dedicated to improving outcomes for patients through the most promising lymphoma research. Recently, four Dana-Farber investigators received LRF research grants, totaling $540,000, to examine wide-ranging issues in lymphoma.

An attending physician in the Division of Lymphoma, Reid Merryman, MD, focuses on the development of immune-based therapies for patients with lymphoma. With an LRF Clinical Investigator Career Development Award, Merryman is studying whether combining two checkpoint inhibitors, nivolumab and ipilimumab, is effective for treating patients with relapsed/refractory classical Hodgkin lymphoma. He has designed a phase 2 clinical trial of this combination and will also investigate treatment-induced changes in the tumor microenvironment and mechanisms of response and resistance.

Three researchers were awarded LRF Postdoctoral Fellowship grants. Lydie Debaze, PhD, is defining vulnerabilities in minimal residual disease (MRD)—the small number of cancer cells that remain in a patient’s body and later give rise to relapse—in mantle cell lymphoma. Her goal is to develop new treatment combinations that can destroy MRD cells and prevent relapse.

Elisa Mandato, PhD, is using research models and human tumor samples to examine disrupted immune recognition pathways in diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL). Her study aims to establish a role for CD27 and CD70 proteins in the generation of an effective anti-DLBCL immune response and define this pathway as a promising therapeutic target.

Nicole Prutsch, PhD, is studying signaling pathways that enable the growth of anaplastic large cell lymphoma (ALCL), an aggressive T-cell lymphoma with limited treatment options for around half of the patients in which ALK driver mutations are absent. Prutsch’s focus is on identifying genes that are selectively essential for cell growth and survival of ALK-negative ALCL in order to identify new targeted therapies that kill ALCL cells without known driver mutations.

“Dana-Farber’s scientists demonstrate time and time again the incredible promise of finding cures for lymphoma,” said Meghan Gutierrez, CEO of LRF. “We are proud to support these scientists during this critical time, and look forward to witnessing their continued contributions in advancing our understanding of this disease.”
Grassroots support from around the corner and around the world

Millions of dollars are raised each year by our grassroots community—thousands of people and organizations who commit their energy, passion, and resources to create events that support our groundbreaking research and total patient care. Each event, large or small, advances our mission to prevent, treat, and defy cancer. Here is just a sampling of spring and summer events from near and far.

Aubuchon Hardware’s Hammer Away Cancer

Aubuchon Hardware, family-owned for more than 100 years, held its second annual “Hammer Away Cancer” promotion earlier this year to raise funds for cancer research and patient care at Dana-Farber. Customers in all of Aubuchon’s 105 stores throughout New England and New York were invited to donate any amount at the register, and received a thank-you gift of $5 off their next purchase in exchange for contributions of $5 or more. On top of the more than $54,000 generously donated by customers, the Aubuchon Foundation contributed an additional $25,000, bringing Aubuchon’s 2021 total to nearly $80,000.

Richard Hough, manager of the Saranac Lake, N.Y., store, happily lent his support to the Hammer Away Cancer promotion. Now in remission from colorectal cancer, he said, “I want people to know that even in the worst-case scenario, you can still live life fully and stay positive.”

B.A.A. 5K

A popular feature of the Boston Marathon® weekend each year is the B.A.A. 5K, a race that allows runners of all abilities to be part of the festivities. Although the 2021 Marathon moved to the fall, this year’s B.A.A. 5K remained on the traditional Patriots’ Day weekend as an all-virtual event April 16–18. The virtual format proved a boon for the Dana-Farber team, opening up the opportunity to runners all over the country and increasing the team’s size from 35 to 85 runners—the most in the team’s history—who collectively raised $48,000.

The event’s top fundraiser, Mary Pat Schnitt, runs in honor of the care she received at Dana-Farber. “The doctors, nurses, and staff were always kind, calming, and caring,” she said. “Becoming part of the Dana-Farber B.A.A. 5K team is the perfect way to give back.”

Brooke’s 100K for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

As a member of the women’s rowing team at Boston College, Brook Schwab is accustomed to action. So when a close family friend was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at the young age of 18, Brooke said, “I felt the need to do something in what otherwise felt like a helpless situation.”

On January 26, Brooke set out to row an amazing 100 kilometers—63 miles—on the rowing machine, to raise funds for pancreatic cancer research at Dana-Farber. This was a tremendous effort, given that her training sessions on the rowing machine are normally 2,000 meters, or 5,000 meters at most. With the support of generous family and friends, Brooke surpassed her fundraising goal and raised more than $11,600 for pancreatic cancer, including research to develop a blood test to detect pancreatic cancer earlier, when it has the potential to be more successfully treated.

EveBonnet streams from the Netherlands

Eva, a professional gamer who streams on Twitch as EveBonnet, has used gaming as a way to connect with people not only in the Netherlands, where she lives, but also all over the world. When she was 12 years old, her father passed away after a three-month battle with lung cancer. For her 26th birthday, Eva decided to honor her father’s memory by hosting an eight-hour charity livestream through Jimmy Fund Let’s Game®, rally her community of international followers to raise $1,525 for Dana-Farber. “Fourteen years after my dad’s death, it’s still difficult to talk about and comprehend,” Eva said. “Being able to host a gaming stream to raise money for such an important cause means very much to me. I hope that more people will learn about streaming for the Jimmy Fund, because every dollar counts.”

The Fessenden School’s gaming tournament

When The Fessenden School in West Newton, Mass., tragically lost Laura Rutherford, the school’s CFO and a beloved member of their community, multiple myeloma, students knew they wanted to honor her memory. The Leadership Lab, a student-run program dedicated to fostering leadership skills and self-development, partnered with Jimmy Fund Let’s Game® to raise funds for Dana-Farber through something the students love: gaming.

Leadership Lab students organized a week-long, virtual video game tournament of 64 students in teams of eight to compete and raise critical funds, playing the online trivia game Quiplash. The Fessenden community rallied around their shared cause to raise $6,400, nearly tripling their original goal. The tournament meant more than just getting out of classes for the students of the Fessenden Leadership Lab—it was a way to use their leadership skills to honor and support loved ones that have been affected by cancer.

Georgia Has Talent

Georgia Has Talent is an annual talent show fundraiser sponsored by the Beat Our Cancer Club at Cherokee High School in Canton, Ga. The club and the event were founded by Spanish teacher Jay Haller in honor of his mother, Kit, who passed away from ovarian cancer. Despite the challenges of transitioning from a live event that attracted 1,000 attendees to a virtual production, thanks to dozens of performers, student volunteers, and in-kind sponsors the event marked its 10-year anniversary in March by raising $11,000 in unrestricted funds for cancer care and research at Dana-Farber.

When he was deciding where the event’s dollars should go, “I asked around to see who in my ‘circle’ had a positive experience either as a patient or through fundraising, and Dana-Farber came up numerous times,” Jay said. “Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund hold a special place in my heart.”

The virtual Georgia Has Talent event raises unrestricted funds for the Jimmy Fund.
10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission

**Nationwide support doubles success of 2nd annual Giving Day**

With generous community support, the second annual Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund Giving Day raised an incredible $1.17 million, more than double the 2020 total. Making the milestone possible was an anonymous Institute Trustee who matched all gifts up to $250,000, several donors who stepped up with large donations, and even a King—a pediatric patient at Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic who shared his story of what Dana-Farber has meant to him and his family. Giving Day, held on May 26, closely followed the public announcement of The Dana-Farber Campaign the previous week, with its rallying cry to “Defy Cancer.” It marked the launch of the Dana-Farber Defy Cancer Fund, which provided motivation and purpose for more than 3,700 donors from across the country to offer their financial support to the strategic priorities of The Dana-Farber Campaign: Revolutionary Science, Extraordinary Care, Exceptional Expertise, and Essential Opportunities. Leading up to Giving Day and throughout May 26, patients shared stories via email and social media, demonstrating the need for support but also the excellence of the care and research at Dana-Farber. King, for example, who is still in treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia with an excellent prognosis, was particularly inspiring and emotional for some donors. During the effort, his mother, Natasha, told the community, “I look at my son and think about all he has been through already. I admire him. He’s my hero. These children are strong and resilient. They are our future.” The message from a pediatric cancer patient like King and his family touched many. Loyal supporters Arthur and Denise Katsaros committed $100,000 to Giving Day to help fulfill the Defy Cancer Fund match. “Our family was touched by pediatric cancer a number of years ago,” commented Arthur. “We understand the toll it takes on families and we’re so pleased we are able to help others through Dana-Farber.”

Another story that encouraged the community to make generous gifts to Dana-Farber was that of Jillian, who in 2016 completed treatment for stage II B Hodgkin lymphoma at Dana-Farber. “Defying cancer means being proud of myself,” she explained. “It took me a long time to be able to share my cancer story with others.” The unsurpassed generosity of the community of donors will enable Dana-Farber to pursue innovative early stage research; speed new drugs into clinical trials; maintain a world-class research and clinical team; increase access to care and reduce disparities; meet unanticipated needs, such as those imposed by COVID-19; and even support special programs that address the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of patients and families.

The generosity of our donors during Giving Day will go a long way in achieving The Dana-Farber Campaign’s important quest to defy cancer.

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**Rally Against Cancer celebrates return of Fenway Opening Day**

Rally Against Cancer™ presented by Chowdaheadz celebrated the return to springtime baseball on Opening Day, April 2. Rally fundraising teams donated to the Jimmy Fund and were entered to win Sox player visits, as baseball returned to Fenway Park.

Rally Against Cancer raised more than $250,000 this year for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, demonstrating the historical and important relationship between the Red Sox and the Jimmy Fund dating back to 1953. Though virtual celebrations replaced in-person activities on Rally day, fans’ enthusiasm did not waver as they fundraised for the Jimmy Fund while rooting for their beloved Boston team. Select Rally teams were invited to a VIP Pre-Opening Day virtual event featuring former Red Sox pitcher Tim Wakefield and NESN’s Tom Caron. “The connection between the Jimmy Fund and the Red Sox was an immediate draw...it was important to me to give back to the community that I played in,” Wakefield shared while talking about his time as a player.

For patients like Rob Dunphy, who was diagnosed with stage IV head and neck squamous cell carcinoma in 2017, fundraising programs like Rally are especially impactful. “The Jimmy Fund, with support from the Red Sox, is able to help patients like myself,” said Rob, Rally’s patient partner in 2021, who helped promote the program and inspire people to give.

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**Taco Bell and KFC customers take care of cancer patients**

Participating New England Taco Bell and KFC locations dished up more than fried chicken and tacos last March: they also provided hope for cancer patients, raising more than $151,000 for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Both restaurant chains have a long history of fundraising for cancer care and research. Taco Bell has partnered with the Jimmy Fund since 2000, raising nearly $2.1 million, and KFC since 2006, raising more than $600,000 to support Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission.

“Supporting Dana-Farber has always been important to Taco Bell and KFC,” says Roger Lockwood, campaign organizer, Institute Trustee, and chairman of the Lockwood/McKinnon Company, a Taco Bell franchise. “We continue to be committed to help Dana-Farber maintain its excellent standard of care, pandemic or no pandemic,” he added.

To promote the program, restaurants displayed signage featuring Dana-Farber patients who participated in the “I am Jimmy” marketing campaign. Cashiers at drive-thru windows wore customized buttons and asked patrons for donations at checkout. In addition, social media posts promoting the program spotlighted 6-year-old Aileen, a pediatric patient in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic.

When asked why the family wanted Aileen to serve as ambassador to the Taco Bell and KFC program, Aileen’s mother, Haley, explained, “Dana-Farber has provided Aileen with first-class treatment and support, and guided us through an extremely challenging time in our lives. The best thing we can do is show up for them, like they have shown up for us.”

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**Supporters of Giving Day were inspired by patients like King (far left, with his family).**

**Six-year-old Aileen served as patient partner for the Taco Bell and KFC fundraising program.**

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**Our family was touched by pediatric cancer a number of years ago. We understand the toll it takes on families and we’re so pleased we are able to help others through Dana-Farber.”** — ARTHUR KATSAROS

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10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission
Walsh Family advances research in hereditary pancreatic cancer

A

Boston-based researcher in immuno-oncology, Nicole Walsh, PhD, has had a longstanding interest in the biological underpinnings of cancer, in some part inspired by an alarming pattern of cancer on her father’s side—her grandmother, two grand-aunts, her father, and one of her uncles were all diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. As Nicole moved through her education and into her career with a strong focus in biology and the sciences, she became increasingly aware of how rare her family’s history with this disease is.

Through her father’s primary oncologist at Dana-Farber, Matthew Yurgelun, MD, director of the Lynch Syndrome Center, Nicole learned of a Dana-Farber-led study into a newly discovered genetic mutation that increases risk for pancreatic cancer, encouraging the Walsh Family to get involved. Nicole was inspired to make a gift of $100,000 in support of the research, led by Sahar Nissim, MD, PhD.

“Hereditary pancreatic cancer is not an area that attracts a lot of support,” said Nicole. “The more we can learn about the mechanisms of pancreatic cancer, the more we can help everyone—not just families like mine,” said Nicole. Hereditary pancreatic cancer is not an area that attracts a lot of funding, so anything I can do to support Dr. Nissim’s work in this area is what I feel inspired to do.”

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Grant fuels epigenetics research

Since 1967, the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation has played a part in breakthrough after breakthrough in treating inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), improving the quality of life for millions of children and adults. The foundation’s mission intersects with the mission of Dana-Farber, and the foundation has a history of providing valuable funding to Dana-Farber researchers tackling projects related to gastrointestinal diseases. The foundation’s latest gift to Dana-Farber of $174,750 supports the work of Saumya Gupta, PhD, who is studying gene expression in Crohn’s disease. By characterizing the differences in gene expression between healthy and diseased intestine, Gupta aims to assess how epigenetics may be altered in diseased cells to be more like healthy cells.

“In Crohn’s disease, chronic inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract can skip or leave normal areas in between patches of diseased intestine,” said Gupta. “I have demonstrated that cells can maintain stable differences in gene expression, and that changing their epigenetic memory can make cells more similar to each other. If successful, this work should uncover new information about the biology of Crohn’s disease, and open new doors to disease treatment and prevention.”

‘We are pleased to advance this work in gene expression,’ said Caren Heller, MD, MBA, chief scientific officer for the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation. ‘We are committed to finding better treatment and cures for IBD, and supporting research like this will help us deepen our understanding of Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis and bring us closer to a future free from IBD. ’

“Supporting research like this will bring us closer to a future free from IBD.”
— CAREN HELLER, MD, MBA, Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation

Funding bolsters investigation into rise in young-onset cases

Since 1994, cases of colorectal cancer in younger people have increased by 51% according to the National Cancer Institute. To help investigate this alarming rise in incidence, the Colorectal Cancer Alliance awarded a grant totaling $300,000 to Kimmie Ng, MD, MPH, director of the Young-Onset Colorectal Cancer Center at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

These funds will support Ng’s study on the microbiome and anti-tumor immunity in patients with young-onset colorectal cancer (those diagnosed before 50 years of age).

“The underlying causes of young-onset colorectal cancer are currently unknown, but we suspect that dietary and environmental factors may be influencing the microbiome, leading to increasing rates among young individuals,” said Ng. “This grant from the Colorectal Cancer Alliance will support a large research effort to further investigate the impact of the microbiome on development of colorectal cancer in patients across the spectrum of young age, compared to older patients with the disease.”

Ng and her team are collecting stool samples from patients around the world and working with collaborators to perform genomic sequencing on the specimens and to create novel mouse models to study the microbiomes of patients with young-onset colorectal cancer. These efforts will help to reveal the complex interplay of cancer cells, immune cells, and microbial cells that can lead to malignancy. Findings from this study could help illuminate the cause of young-onset colorectal cancer, opening new avenues to treatment.

“We are honored to invest in this critical study and grateful to Dr. Ng for her commitment to discovery in young-onset colorectal cancer,” said Michael Sapienza, CEO of the Colorectal Cancer Alliance.

“The Alliance is committed to ending this disease in our lifetime, with research answers at the forefront of that outcome.”

Do Good. Feel Good. SAVE 6% on your Arbella auto policy when you donate $50 or more to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund*

As a benefit to our donors, when eligible Massachusetts residents donate $50 or more to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund, they may receive 6% off their Arbella auto policy.

*Conditions apply. Visit Arbella.com/NGR for details.
The Mathers Foundation invests $1.35 million in discovery science

The G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Charitable Foundation has awarded two grants totaling $1.35 million to David Pellman, MD, and Philip Kranzusch, PhD, to advance promising studies in basic, discovery science at Dana-Farber that could lead to the development of new cancer therapeutics.

Previous studies funded by The Mathers Foundation led to Pellman’s discovery that certain errors arising during cell division cause large-scale genetic abnormalities that help drive cancer evolution, and cellular forces similar to those involved in muscle contraction play a key role in these events. Now, a $750,000 grant from The Mathers Foundation will allow him to explore how these same contractile forces affect the proteins that bind to DNA to help govern global gene expression, cell division, and other cellular processes.

“The concept that mechanical tension within the cell could affect DNA packaging and gene expression is appealing and could help us better understand how cancers develop,” said Pellman, who is the Margaret M. Dyson Professor of Pediatric Oncology. “Ongoing support from The Mathers Foundation will allow us to explore this idea, which could change our fundamental understanding of how chromatin alterations occur during tumor development.”

Kranzusch’s research focuses on molecular messengers that regulate how cells respond to pathogens. One such messenger produced by the enzyme cGAS enables infected cells to trigger an ancient cellular defense mechanism known as the innate immune response, which enlists the immune system to eliminate pathogens as well as cancer cells. Kranzusch has discovered thousands of proteins similar to cGAS that control antiviral immunity in bacteria and animal cells. With a $600,000 grant from The Mathers Foundation, he will study the molecular messengers produced by these enzymes and determine how to manipulate them to induce cancer-fighting immune responses.

“Support from The Mathers Foundation will allow our lab to develop new approaches to explain how bacterial and animal cells sense and respond to these molecular messengers,” said Kranzusch. “Findings from this research have the potential to fill key gaps in our knowledge about how innate immunity functions to protect from viral infection and cancer.”

Established in 1982, The Mathers Foundation has granted more than $350 million to support research aimed at advancing knowledge in the life sciences. Recognizing that truly transformative breakthroughs usually occur when investigators gain a thorough understanding of the fundamental mechanisms underlying natural phenomena, the foundation mainly funds basic scientific research with an eye toward translating foundational discoveries into new treatments for patients—aligning with The Dana-Farber Campaign’s strategic priority of advancing discovery science.

“The G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Foundation is pleased to support cutting-edge scientific research that may make a difference in patients’ lives,” said the foundation’s Director of Operations Zach Handelman. “We have found a trusted partner in Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.”

Levitan-Zabin Fund leads the way on post-treatment support for glioma survivors

For many years, Neal Levitan and Audrey Zabin have supported Dana-Farber’s mission through involvement with the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) and the Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrated Therapies and Healthy Living. Most recently, the couple established the Levitan-Zabin Fund for GROW Support with a gift of $250,000, to advance work led by David Reardon, MD, clinical director of the Center for Neuro-Oncology at Dana-Farber, that focuses on the effects of glioma brain tumors among patients after they have completed treatment.

A glioma survivor himself, Neal knows firsthand the experience of living with this disease, and its lasting side effects. As a rider on the same PMC team as Reardon, Neal has advocated for interventions that address the psychological as well as cognitive and physical effects of gliomas and their therapy, an area of cancer care that both Neal and Reardon agree is underrepresented.

The Levitan-Zabin Fund provides the necessary funding to establish the GROW Support Program led by Reardon, and his colleague, Tim Sannes, PhD, to undertake a multidisciplinary interventional approach that includes psychology, social work, nursing staff, and clinicians. Programs like this are emblematic of Dana-Farber’s signature Total Patient Care model, a key priority of The Dana-Farber Campaign.

“This initiative will allow us to work with patients and families once they are off treatment to dive into some of the impact of the disease on their overall quality of life,” said Reardon. “Thanks to Neal and Audrey’s gift, we’re looking forward to expanding on this first and one-of-a-kind program, with the hope that it will become universal and standard in treating glioma and other cancers.”

David Pellman, MD (left), and Philip Kranzusch, PhD, will pursue foundational research in cell biology and cancer immunology with generous support from the G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Charitable Foundation.
The V Foundation for Cancer Research, founded by ESPN and legendary basketball coach Jim Valvano, continued its longstanding support of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute investigators with two recent awards to advance the understanding of cancer. With two grants totaling $800,000, the V Foundation is supporting The Dana-Farber Campaign’s key pillar of advancing revolutionary science, a vital step toward defying cancer. Jun Qí, PhD, and Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD, were awarded $600,000 through the foundation’s translational grant program to study the role of little-understood tumor-promoting proteins in the development of diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG), an aggressive, hard-to-treat pediatric brain cancer. They also endeavor to develop new compounds to target these proteins and help treat the disease, which currently has a median survival of less than 12 months. If successful, they will bring new drugs into clinical trials, giving new options—and hope—to patients and their families.

Sahand Hormoz, PhD, received a $200,000 V Scholar grant to support his work in myeloproliferative neoplasm (MPN), a blood cancer that often progresses to acute leukemia. He aims to understand why the disease’s presentation and response to therapy varies so much by patient; to reconstruct how the cancer cells evolved, for each patient; to predict disease progression; and, ultimately, discover new therapies to treat it. “Our goal is to develop a safe and potent ALK vaccine to improve outcomes for our patients,” said Awad. “We have seen promising results in preclinical studies for this vaccine, and thanks to this funding from LUNGevity, we are looking forward to building on that success in this new clinical trial.”

“ALK Positive is thankful for LUNGevity’s efforts in giving patients a voice in research funding,” said Gina Hollenbeck, president of ALK Positive. “We are hopeful that this research partnership will help ALK Positive advance our mission to improve the life expectancy and quality of life for ALK-positive cancer patients worldwide.”

Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance continues longstanding partnership with Dana-Farber

For two decades, Dana-Farber investigators and patients alike have benefitted from a steadfast partnership with Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA), the largest and oldest charity in the world dedicated to advancing research, advocacy, and care for ovarian cancer. This year, OCRA has awarded the Institute more than $500,000 to support innovative research of an early career scientist and grow our peer support program for patients with gynecologic cancers. Liya Ding, PhD, was awarded the Liz Tilberis Early Career Award to advance research into overcoming drug resistance in high-grade serous ovarian cancer. Specifically, her work in the laboratory seeks to shed light on the cellular processes that underlie resistance to PARP inhibitors, a class of drugs that target a molecule used by cancer cells to repair their DNA. Ding will leverage her funding to further study a recently identified mechanism that may be driving drug resistance. She also seeks to develop novel treatment strategies for patients who develop resistance to PARP inhibitors. “I am incredibly grateful for this substantial support from OCRA, which will allow me to not only accelerate my career, but push forward research with potential to yield new treatment options for patients in the future.”

With funding from OCRA, Woman to Woman peer support program, Dana-Farber will also expand staffing for One-to-One, a program that connects trained volunteers to patients and families dealing with cancer. This support will allow One-to-One to enhance engagement and increase recruitment for patients and families facing gynecologic cancers.

“We are thrilled to continue our 20-year partnership with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute,” said Audrey Moran, president and CEO of OCRA. “Investing in researchers who are proposing bold, novel approaches to studying this disease, and supporting a peer-to-peer mentoring program between newly diagnosed patients and survivors, exemplifies the 360-degree approach we take to fighting ovarian cancer in the lab, on Capitol Hill, and by the sides of patients and their families.”

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ALK Positive patient group and LUNGevity help launch clinical trial for novel lung cancer vaccine

ALK Positive—a patient group comprised of more than 2,000 ALK-positive lung cancer patients and survivors—recently partnered with the LUNGevity Foundation to award $750,000 to Dana-Farber’s Mark Awad, MD, PhD, clinical director of the Thoracic Oncology Treatment Center, who is using the funds to launch a clinical trial testing a new vaccine immunotherapy for ALK-positive lung cancer. Both organizations provide hope for patients facing lung cancer through support for cutting-edge research into early detection and more effective treatments.

ALK-positive lung cancer is a subset of non-small cell lung cancer characterized by a mutation in the anaplastic lymphoma kinase (ALK) gene. Over the years, a number of targeted therapies have proved effective against this type of lung cancer, but patients often develop drug resistance and subsequently relapse. To combat this issue, Awad and his team have worked to develop an ALK vaccine immunotherapy that stimulates patients’ immune cells to recognize and eliminate these tumors. Preclinical studies have demonstrated that the vaccine can both prevent the development of ALK-positive tumors as well as more effectively treat them once they arise. LUNGevity’s award will allow the team to move forward with a clinical trial, which the team plans to open within the next two years. “Our goal is to develop a safe and potent ALK vaccine to improve outcomes for our patients,” said Awad. “We have seen promising results in preclinical studies for this vaccine, and thanks to this funding from LUNGevity, we are looking forward to building on that success in this new clinical trial.”

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V Foundation advances revolutionary science through two new gifts
A gift for older women with breast cancer

Professor Diane Couplouos was introduced to the Program for Older Women with Breast Cancer at Dana-Farber by her philanthropic advisor through her donor advised fund. When she understood the scope and goals of the program, she was inspired to support the work of Rachel Freedman, MD, MPH.

Diane is a two-time breast cancer survivor. With diagnoses 20 years apart, she says, “When I first had cancer, it was an easier process. It was a shock to be diagnosed again and to need more extensive surgery and treatment.”

Older patients with breast cancer face unique challenges. Diane says, “The treatment team must manage all of the potential challenges that can arise for older adults.”

“Women over 70 are increasingly affected by breast cancer but are often underserved, and outcomes from the disease are disproportionately worse than those of older age groups,” Diane said.

Freedman seeks to eliminate these disparities. Her goal for the Program for Older Women with Breast Cancer, the only one of its kind, is to improve patients’ representation in clinical trials and elevate their care — strategic priorities of the Institute and of The Dana-Farber Campaign. Diane saw the importance of seedling this project. She says, “I was inspired by Dr. Freedman’s dedication and enthusiasm about what she was doing.”

Freedman had long looked to launch this initiative. “My vision is to provide a unique, supported, patient-centered experience for older women with breast cancer that also supports caregivers and provides research opportunities,” said Freedman, who also focuses her time outside of clinic on improving the care of women traditionally underrepresented in research.

Diane’s gift of $300,000 established a fund to seed the clinical program. Her generosity will help bring more support into the clinic to improve care for older patients in the future.

In July, the 2021 Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk: Your Way presented by Hyundai celebrated its first 100 Pacesetters at a special outing to a Boston Red Sox game at Fenway Park. Pacesetters are an elite group of top fundraisers who raise $1,000 or more ($300 or more if under 18). Among the Pacesetters attending this special event were (from left) Christine Singleton, Team Captain of Barb’s Breeze, and her husband, Christopher Singleton; and Jane Nunes, Team Captain of J WALKERS, and her husband, Frank Campolo III. Barb’s Breeze has been walking for 11 years in honor of Christine’s mom, Barb, and has raised more than $103,000 during that time. The J WALKERS have been walking since 2003 and have raised more than $187,000. They are all looking forward to walking “their way” on Sunday, October 3, and helping Dana-Farber defy cancer.
To brighten the day for patients in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic and their families, Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood Foundation hosted Capturin’ Joy, a family photo day at Fenway Park in June. Patients age 16 or older like Rosemary, above with her brothers, were invited to forget about treatment for a day and create a special memory, posing for photos with a professional photographer while safely distanced in private suites.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

OCTOBER
Jimmy Fund Let’s Game’s Quest 2
Defy Cancer

Attention content creators and gamers! No matter your location, no matter your game, you can make a difference in the lives of cancer patients. All October long, host your own livestream or tune in to one of our highlighted streamer events. Visit JimmyFundLetsGame.org or contact Kenneth Chamberlain at JimmyFundLetsGame@dfci.harvard.edu.

OCTOBER 3
Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk: Your Way
Presented by Hyundai

Take steps to defy cancer in your local community, in the Jimmy Fund Walk: Your Way, which will take place virtually in 2021. Register now or learn more at JimmyFundWalk.org or contact Mary Perron at MaryC_Perron@dfci.harvard.edu or 866-531-9255.

OCTOBER 8–11
Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge

The DFMC team is taking off from the start line, virtually or in person, this October. Support a Dana-Farber runner in the Boston Marathon® by donating at RunDFMC.org or contact Kelly Wicks at DFMC@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOVEMBER 30
GivingTuesday

With your help, we have the power to defy cancer. On this global day of generosity, your gift will be doubled, thanks to a $10,000 matching challenge from Arbella Insurance. Visit JimmyFund.org/GivingTuesday or contact Ashley Armstrong at Annual_Giving@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–OCTOBER 31
Join the Susan F. Smith Center Executive Council to Defy Cancer

This fall, as part of The Dana-Farber Campaign, the Executive Council has committed to match all gifts to the Smith Center Innovation Fund from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31, supporting early research to defy women’s cancers. Visit Dana-Farber.org/SGSCEGift to contribute and have your gift matched today! Contact Maryann Zschau at Maryann_Zschau@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–DECEMBER 31
Dana-Farber Holiday Cards
Presented by Amica Insurance

Embrace a holiday tradition that’s full of hope. Purchase cards to spread cheer while making a difference in the fight against cancer. View the complete collection and order online at Dana-FarberHoliday.org.

YEAR ROUND
Boston Red Sox/Jimmy Fund License Plates

Show pride for your hometown team every time you hit the road with a Boston Red Sox/Jimmy Fund license plate and help raise critical funds for patient care and research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Join this winning team by purchasing your own special plate today at JimmyFund.org/Plate or contact Amber Forrence at Amber_Forrence@dfci.harvard.edu.

YEAR ROUND
Jimmy Fund Golf
Presented by Mohegan Sun

Get on the right course to fight cancer® with JimmyFundGolf presented by Mohegan Sun. Plan your own golf tournament or mini golf event or play in an exciting event this season! Visit JimmyFundGolf.org or contact Victoria Fox at JimmyFund_Golf@dfci.harvard.edu.